

Gender, Empowerment and Globalisation Research Cluster

Working Paper No. 2 (2009)

GROW-ing Neo-Secularisation

Dr. Vesna Maleševi

School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway

Dr. Áine Lorie

School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway



Gender, Empowerment and Globalisation Research Cluster

School of Political Science and Sociology

National University of Ireland, Galway

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/soc/>

Title: GROW-ing Neo-Secularisation

Authors: Vesna Maleševi and Áine Lórié

Contact details:

Vesna Maleševi

School of Political Science and Sociology
Aras Moyola, floor 2, room 324
National University of Ireland Galway
Galway, Ireland
Tel: + 353 91 495014
Fax: + 353 91 494564
E-mail: vesna.malesevic@nuigalway.ie

Áine Lórié

School of Political Science and Sociology
Aras Moyola, floor 2
National University of Ireland Galway
Galway, Ireland
E-mail: kilaine@yahoo.com

Biographical note:

Vesna Maleševi, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland Galway. Her research interests lie in the fields of sociology of religion, sociology of sexuality, Irish society and Central and Eastern Europe. She delivered numerous conference papers and public lectures on the topics of religion and sexuality and her journal article publications reflect this output. She is an editor on the editorial board of *The Irish Journal of Feminist Studies*.

Áine Lórié, Ph.D., has currently passed her viva examination at the National University of Ireland Galway where she works as a tutor in the School of Political Science and Sociology as well as teaches online as part of the Certificate and/or Diploma in Irish Studies in partnership with the NUIG's Irish Studies Centre and Regis University.

Title: GROW-ing Neo-Secularisation

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between religion and mental illness in the secularising Irish context. It is claimed that secularisation theory is limited in its analytical scope and therefore neo-secularisation theory helps to understand not only the declining influence of religion and religious organisations but also the changing position, influence and role of the religious authority structures. It is argued that the non-denominational peer-led, voluntary group GROW acts as an alternative (religious) authority system in the context of mental health support. Using relevant methodological approaches our research findings suggest that the effects of neo-secularisation processes have contributed to the re-location of authority structures from religious to seemingly non-religious venues.

Key words:

Neo-secularisation, mental health, Ireland, GROW

Introduction

Irish society has been described as one of the most religious places in Europe. However secularising tendencies have been recorded in the last couple of decades in relation to the declining influence of both religion and the Catholic Church (Keogh in Woodcock Tentler 2007, Inglis 1998, Corish 1996). Different qualitative and quantitative studies have shown that religiosity is changing in its contents and shape (Dowling in Fulton et.al. 2000, Inglis 2007a, Greeley and Ward 2003). Nonetheless, the utilisation of secularisation theory in explaining the changing tendencies in religious field focuses on a top down approach where religious institutions seem only to react to the wider social and political processes. Therefore neo-secularisation theory aims to salvage analytically useful components of secularisation theory but also extends debate by focusing on the concept of religious authority instead of religion per se. This approach enables debate to account for the interactional relationship between society and religious structures as well as for inter- and intra-institutional changes and tensions.

By adopting this angle of analysis the relationship between mental illness and religious coping is placed within a wider discussion of the effects of declining religious authority structures in Irish society. Namely, the argument is that persons with mental health problems substitute and/or supplement established religious authority guidelines with alternative (religious) authority principles. In the case of this study where the findings come from, the organisation called GROW adopts alternative religious/spiritual authority when assisting individuals with mental health problems. Therefore the main question that this paper aims to answer is whether mental health sufferers predominantly use established religious frameworks (mostly Catholic within the Irish context) or have they moved on to incorporate a variety of religion/spirituality based coping mechanisms? And if so, to what extent does the utilisation of alternative religious/spiritual practices reflect particular claims of neo-secularisation theory in terms of the institutions' reliance on the invocation of the supernatural to legitimise their social position and messaging? On account of what seems to be a fairly strong religious or spiritual affiliation, we will consider how members of a peer-led, mental health group known as GROW extends, transforms,

and reworks religious coping although still largely drawing from within a Catholic religious framework.

In order to support the above arguments, the paper is divided into the following sections: one, theoretical discussion of secularisation and neo-secularisation is provided which is then posited in the Irish context to present accounts on the changing religious field. Two, our methodology section details the research process where the findings presented here come from. Three, empirical findings from the project called ‘Sacred Belief and Secular Health: A Study on Religion and Mental Illness in Modern Irish Society’ are structured into four areas of GROW’s general background, group meetings, text and interviews. In the final section we discuss the implications of religious messaging within the group GROW and relate the research findings in the context of theoretical inclination to neo-secularisation theory.

Theory

Secularisation theory debates can be most broadly distinguished into two main camps: one, “the inherited model” (Wilson 1985) and, two, religious economies model. The first school of thought relies on the analysis of modernisation processes to account for the changing role and position of religion and religious organisations and the subsequent alterations in religiosity levels and the social/political/economic position of religious organisations. The second model of secularisation theories perceives religion in both the religiosity and the status of religious organisations in terms of economic and exchange models of interaction.

The way how secularisation theories that rely on modernisation theory perceive religion rests on the Enlightenment’s idea of reason and rationality as precursors of both individual and group/institutional actions. There is an inherent assumption that ‘modern’ equals ‘rational’ and therefore ‘irreligious’ and ‘pre-modern’ is equated with ‘irrational’ and therefore ‘religious’. Numerous texts support the idea of the Golden Age of a religious society which is then juxtaposed with the contemporary, rational and seemingly irreligious society. These arguments were brought forward by Auguste Comte, Edward B. Tylor, James Frazer and later Sigmund Freud to

dismantle religion as unworthy of modern men who rely on reason and science and not supernatural explanations for conduct of their private and public affairs. There is also a further assumption that if there is anyone left religious that they would conduct their religious persuasion in private realms in their own time while matters of public life would be freed from supernatural evocations.

However, it is precisely this ideological component as perceived by some (Bellah 1971) that robs secularisation theory of its analytical and comparative potential. Namely the invocation of reason and science as the main and only measures of human conduct negates the lived-out experience of both private and public life in numerous societies where religion and religious organisations play a significant part. Furthermore, secularisation theory from this perspective has been criticised as a myth (Luckmann 1983) developed by philosophers, social scientists and theologians who by evoking the assumed Golden Age of Religion paint a linear picture of historical development. Jeffrey Hadden (1987) is also highly critical of this type of secularisation theory emphasising its inherent evolutionary model of modernisation that hardly allows for cross-cultural comparisons. And finally as a result of the above criticisms, Peter Berger (1992) concluded that only particular strata of a population in Western Europe with a western type of higher education appear to resemble characteristics of secularisation as espoused by modernisation theory. Though acknowledgment is due to scholars (Crippen 1988, Glasner 1977, Greeley 1973, Luckmann 1967, 1990, Martin 1969, 2005) working within secularisation theory who analyse the persistence of religion in modern society due to the surge in fundamentalism or the expansion of new religious movements or authors who work on comparative cases to test the theoretical applicability and analytical validity of this discourse. However, the main criticism of the above analyses rests with their conceptualisation of the matter at hand; namely, all of the accounts tend to analyse religion per se although some (i.e. Casanova 1994) have claimed that it is more theoretically sound at this point to define the 'secular' in order to say anything empirically operable about the 'religious'.

The second most broadly defined school of thought that relies on rational choice analyses of religion marries a rational pursuit of goals with economic behaviour. The

resultant 'believer' is described as a highly rational pursuer of exchange relations with 'gods' who considers a ratio of benefits versus costs (Stark and Bainbridge 1996) when deciding on the god to engage with, on the congregation to become a member of, the amount of time and resources invested in the membership and ultimately being quite certain that 'gods will deliver' since he/she calculated a ratio of the involvement to the rewards expected. However, it is difficult to imagine a society that rests on economic models of religion (Bruce 1993) since such models largely rest on the inherent clause that on most occasions individuals pursue action based on self-interest. This idea that religious commitment rests on the thesis of psychological egoism for it construes religious commitment exclusively as a self-interested action (Jerolmack & Porpora 2004) denies the wealth of data and depth of religious commitment as experienced by believers who as members of groups, associations or a society at large are or chose to be religious due to social, political or economic pressures.

Both the "inherited model" and the religious economies model perceive religion as something 'that happens' to individuals and societies either by choice or pressure but do not consider how changes in the perception of religious authority lead to changes in the position and role of religion and religious organisations in society. Here neo-secularisation theory comes to the rescue in a form of its focus, definition and orientation to the phenomenon of religion. As Yamane (1997) claims, it is not so much about the specificity of religious beliefs or frequency of ritual attendance; the issue under consideration is "the orientation people have to religious authority structures" (Yamane, 1997:116). In order to analyse this orientation we need to start from its definitions. Therefore, religious authority structure is defined "as a social structure that attempts to enforce its order and reach its ends by controlling the access of individuals to some desired goods where the legitimating of that control includes some supernatural component, however weak" (Chaves, 1994:755-6). This definition implies that religious authority structures rely on the invocation of the supernatural to secure control over goods perceived as desired by their supporters. This is a highly relevant point in that religious authority structures, being one among various social structures, is in competition with others for membership, continuous loyalty and enduring obedience. Furthermore, the point has been made that to study only religious

authority structures in religious settings overlooks the secular manifestations of religious discourse (Grant, O'Neill and Stephens 2003). To investigate religious authority structures in society in both their decline and rise, one is bound to study situations where religious authority is relocated from religious to non-religious settings. Therefore, "researchers need to distinguish between declining religious authority (secularisation) and the relocation of religious authority" (Grant, O'Neill and Stephens 2003:485).

Placing this debate in the Irish context, the hegemonic prevalence of the Catholic Church and Catholicism both as an institution and a religious faith inevitably leads to the discussion of the implications of such dominant creeds on social agents. Through its pervasive influence in such areas as education, health and welfare coupled with the teachings on sexuality, marriage and procreation the Catholic Church managed to imprint its ethos in all the areas of public and private life.

Once an exclusive prevail of the Roman Catholic Church's institutional authority, the expansive Catholic ethos seems to persevere in numerous organisations throughout contemporary Ireland. Inglis' (2001: 49-50) study on Irish civil society and the Catholic Church firmly illustrates how the Church's former stronghold over the Irish habitus also permeated civil society and its various interest groups. He (2000: 54) also explained how even though the Church was an interest group in itself and strategically depended on the loyalty of its members, the Church also supported other interest groups that were not directly affiliated with the institution but defended Catholic affiliated positions or teachings. This linkage was largely due to the extensive influence of the Catholic ethos. Inglis (2001: 56) elaborates, "it was the inculcation of a Catholic ethos", which he defines as "a Catholic way of reading and understanding oneself and the community and society in which life was lived, of a Catholic language and way of expressing oneself, which formed the basis of the Church's power in civil society". One adopts this Catholic ethos, according to Inglis (2001: 56), via their socialisation especially within certain social sectors that the Church has a strong connection with such as the home, education, health and social welfare.

Powell and Guerin (1997: 74) confirm a fairly sturdy connection between the Catholic Church and the myriad of voluntary organisations existing in Ireland over the years. They (1997: 31) illustrate how the Green Paper firmly acknowledges the powerful religious role of the Catholic Church in this sector of Irish society. Faughnan and Kelleher (in Powell and Guerin 1997: 76) found that fifty-seven percent of Irish voluntary organisations were heavily influenced by the Church in terms of having a religious founder, providing finances and premises, and even occupying the position of director. Powell and Guerin (1997: 76) see this enduring connection as testimony to the adaptable and evolving role of religious power and involvement in the voluntary sector.

Further, one could argue that the relationship between Irish voluntary organisations and the Church could be viewed as a form of neo-secularisation in the sense that it is the Catholic ethos that has repositioned itself outside of its institutional confines and is now operating amongst voluntary organisations. The very pervasiveness of the Catholic ethos demands our understanding of GROW's affiliation with Catholicism not only as a (social) site of the possible relocation of religious authority but also as a site of contested religiosity.

If one considers the levels of religiosity in Ireland, many studies confirm that Ireland is still highly religious especially so in comparative terms (Fahey 2002, Ward 2002). In regard to basic tenets of the Catholic faith, EVS findings between 1981 to 1999 show that great majority believes in life after death and heaven although belief in hell is only present for about half of all respondents. Inglis (2007b, 2007c) comments on this declining uptake by suggesting that perhaps Irish Catholics are becoming similar to Protestants in the rejection of intermediaries and their threat of eternal damnation and a more individualised approach to salvation.

Furthermore, when asked about a personal god, the same set of data reveals that only 50+ age group's belief in a personal god remained stable while it decreased for both 15-29 and 30-49 age cohorts whose belief in a power or force was on the increase within the same time period. This type of finding is linked to the discussion on the impersonality of modern life that requires a rational means-ends rationale for action

(Wilson 1982), therefore demanding a less personalised perception of god. Dobbelaere and Jagodzinski (1995) refer to the growth of the ‘unchurched’ population as a consequence of the widening gap between a modern world-view and the impersonality of modern life.

Also, statistics on service attendance confirm that the generational gap is taking place with a recorded decrease in the categories of ‘more than once a week’ and ‘weekly’ for the 15-29 age group while 50+ cohort shows a steady weekly attendance as well as having the highest ‘more than once a week’ attendance of all age groups. Inglis (2007a) highlights these findings from his own study to indicate that the so-called ‘Creative Catholics’ are more likely to adopt a relaxed attitude to service attendance due to their overall individualistic attitude reflected in a mix-and-match approach to religiosity. In regard to prayer, EVS data from 1999 suggest that over two-thirds of 50+ group pray every day in comparison to one-quarter of 15-29 and two-fifths of the 30-49 age cohorts.

All of the above findings suggest that older one becomes one is more likely to attend religious services and pray regularly, believe in a personal god and life after death, hell and heaven. Luckmann’s (1967) concept of (religious) socialisation helps to illuminate the fact that the individuals adopts a specific value system in early primary socialisation and later build on this established system. However, a question arises whether in the process of secondary socialisation, together with social and political changes, do individuals re-examine their value system in response to the changing perception of religious authority structures? If considering the erosion of trust expressed towards the church providing adequate answers to the problems of family life, moral and social issues, EVS data portrays quite a bleak scenario where the church is found to provide answers only in the area of spiritual needs. This finding is especially alarming for the Catholic Church in Ireland since Andersen & Lavan (in Hilliard & Nic Ghiolla Phadraig 2007) find that in contrast to confidence in Parliament, business and industry, courts and legal system and schools and educational system, which have all experienced an increase, only confidence in the Catholic Church has dropped significantly. After publication of the Ferns report and recently the Ryan report, it is not surprising that attitudes towards institutional church

have changed. In order to show that not only has trust in the church suffered but also that the authority of this religious structure has relocated to a non-religious setting, this paper proceeds to the methodology section to provide the context to the above theoretical discussion.

Methodology

Smith (1981: 112) notes that unlike questionnaires and surveys, qualitative observation and in-depth interviews offer greater clarity or “intersubjective” understanding of social behaviour. These methods are also highly adaptable to many research settings and potentially allow for greater introspection. This approach is especially conducive in research on sensitive areas and/or topics (i.e. mental health). Nonetheless, on account of the problems linked with qualitative research (i.e. rapport building, measuring verbal and non-verbal communication, quality of observations, sampling, analysis of data, and presentation and/or publication of data) Lofland and Lofland (1995) and Smith (1981) agree that methodological diversification enhances validity of the research and its findings.

Lofland and Lofland (1995) list several sources for gathering data such as words and actions (interviewing and observation), supplementary means (documents, newspapers, magazines) and so-called “mucking about” (informal observations and conversations). We are particularly interested in the observation of group meetings, in-depth interviews with GROW members, and the use of supplementary data such as the main textⁱ used by GROW members. With regards to methodological diversification, Hodder (2003: 156) points out that “text can be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular bias of each can be understood and compared”. By exploring GROW text, meetings, and in-depth interviews one overcomes such biases and understands the embedded messages which may assist to either detract from or contribute to the legitimisation of its structural power source. The relevant findings used for this paper originate from the Ph.D. project called ‘Sacred Belief and Secular Health: A Study on Religion and Mental Illness in Modern Irish Society’ undertaken between 2005-2008. Throughout the months of October 2007 till March 2008, ten interviews were completed, twelve GROW meetings were

observed (three in an urban environment and two in rural setting) and the main GROW text was examined. In relation to the meetings, non-participatory observation method was employed with the researcher sitting in in the meetings and taking notes, all in as unobtrusive manner as possible. For the interviews, semi-structured in-depth interviewing technique was utilised for investigating participant's religiosity. The interviews generally lasted between one-to-two hours, all taking place within public facilities. We chose to record the interviews using a standard tape recorder along with a small attached microphone since a tape recorder can more easily subside into the background unlike a video recorder or a notepad. Participants were asked to sign a "Consent Form" in order to officially have their permission to carry out the interview as well as for their own liability. Interviews were guided by four main topics: general background, mental health background, GROW and coping. Our central goal, in relation to the overall study, was to segue the spiritual aspect of GROW into discussing religious and/or spiritual coping. In relation to the GROW text, we focused on the blue book known as *The Programme of Growth to Maturity* (2005) since it is held as the central text used in GROW principally during group meetings.

For the purposes of this article, we will sketch some of the main findings from all three areas to convey the line of argumentation: one, a voluntary group such as GROW, that claims to be non-denominational, is highly reliant upon the Catholic ethos; two, the ritualistic dimension together with the main text used in the GROW meetings both have religious connotations; three, the GROW organisation serves as an alternative authority system that utilises references to the supernatural to convey its messages; four, its members' accounts of personal religiosity highlight wider social trends of distrust towards the Catholic Church, its personnel and doctrines; and, five, GROW members' religiosity reflects a broader point made, namely that Irish Catholics are becoming more individualistic in their religious and spiritual choices (Inglis 2007b).

GROW – General Background

GROW began in Sydney, Australia in 1957 out of a group of individuals frequenting Alcoholics Anonymous who desired a more expansive approach to treating mental

health problems. One of the key founding members was a Catholic priest Fr. Con Keogh. Initially GROW was known as Recovery Groups, although the name was changed in order to reflect its focus on prevention as well as rehabilitation within its twelve-step programme. GROW organisations spread to now include New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, England, the United States of America, Canada and Mauritius. In 1969, GROW was founded in Ireland largely due to Fr. Sean O’Hanlon and his exposure to the organisation during his missionary work. Currently there are over one-hundred-and-thirty groups in Ireland with nine regional offices and one national office in Cork. The organisation is supported by the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health and Children. GROW also works in collaboration with doctors, social workers, religious personnel and/or “mature” members of the community.

In terms of what would appear to be an obvious religious affiliation, GROW officially considers itself as non-denominational and also welcomes secular viewpoints. That being noted, GROW material seems to incorporate a spiritual dimension which would contextually suggest an unofficial preference for a specific (Catholic) denomination. Both these features are somewhat curious since GROW publicityⁱⁱ does not really display any latent or manifest illustrations of a spiritual and/or religious dimension. It would seem as if GROW is attempting to conceal this facet from outside observers and perhaps distance itself from the once reigning religious institution. After pointing out this observation to GROW’s field-coordinator who assisted us during the fieldwork (“Susan”), she mentioned that there is an alternative to the spiritual aspect of GROW material for those not comfortable with such references. She also noted that she has not really had to turn many people’s attention to the secular option, thus also suggesting that most people who attend GROW are comfortable with some form of spirituality or spiritual guidance outside of a specific religion.

GROW – Meetings

Weekly meetings typically take place in the evening and last around two hours. Every meeting is peer-run and peer-led. Some take place on GROW premises and others in a mental health care centre or community centre. Of the five different groups observed,

only one (and since then, two) are explicitly for young-adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty with the highest number of attendees (twelve). Other groups usually range between four and eight attendees and are comprised of mostly adult males in their forties, fifties and sixties. The meeting is broken into five different parts in accordance with a leaflet entitled *The Group Method* that details the sections, quotations, topics and time allotted to each section. After the formal part of the meeting, members gather for informal socialising.

Roles

The leadership of the meetings works on a rotation basis as long as the person has been a member of GROW for at least three months. Other leadership roles include: the group organiser, the recorder and the visiting field worker. Most of the respondents had led a meeting at least once and all had commented on a feeling of great sense of responsibility with Freddy saying how it gave him a “sense of control and responsibility”. Group meetings are not intended to be overtly dominated by any one member, including the leader and it is a field worker’s role to prevent that from happening unless a person’s problem is urgent and dire.

Structure of Meetings

The “Opening Routine” begins with a half-a-minute silence in which members are advised to collect their thoughts. The next part called “The Memento” is read by the leader and it has a strong prayer-like potential, specifically on account of everyone’s slight bowing of their heads. The leader reads from *The Group Method*: “while we place ourselves in the presence of God, the Supreme Healer, for the work of this meeting, let us not think only of our own needs and troubles, but let us invoke His guidance and help...” for all the members and supporters of GROW.

The next part in the routine is the reading of the “Twelve Steps of Recovery and Personal Growth”. Someone other than the leader reads all 12 steps including the one referring to god: “3. We surrendered to the healing power of a wise and loving God” (*Growth*, 2005: 5). The “Twelve Steps”, like other twelve-step programmes, assist in structuring a group like GROW by setting out a personal target for each member to reach in chronological order. All the steps are taken on by the members themselves at

their own pace but with assistance from the group. GROW's yellow book, *Readings for Mental Health* (2001), helps expand on the concepts of each step for those who need further clarification.

The final part of the "Opening Routine" called "The Grow Commitment" is recited by all attending members out loud and it is a pledge to uphold to the meeting's integrity and confidentiality. This is followed by a brief phrase that is intended to be read while linking hands: "In GROW we believe in one another, We love one another, and We trust one another" (*Growth*, 2005: 77).

The second phase called "Group Interaction" begins. Typically one member gives what is known as a "Personal Testimony" which is followed by the group's discussion of their respective problems. Many interviewed participants confirmed that personal testimonies of others greatly inspired them to stay with GROW in the assured hopes of recovering. During "Reports on Progress" and the "Recommendation of Practical Tasks" everyone is encouraged to discuss their progress from the previous week since an individual problem is paired with one phrase from the central blue book *The Program of Growth to Maturity* (2005).

The "Middle Routine" begins with two passages from the blue book: the "Affirmation of Good" and "The Act of Surrender". Both are read out loud by all and have a prayer-like tone. Unlike the "Affirmation of Good", the "Act of Surrender" specifically relates to god:

"True, Strong, and Loving God, Supreme Healer, Knowingly and deliberately I now (make the decision) confirm my decision To abandon myself entirely to Your wise and powerful love. This day and forever I surrender to You My mind with all its powers, My body with all its part, My feelings, pleasant and painful, And especially my will, Take my life under Your care And take my will into Your own. Rule me and possess me and use me. Do what You like with me. Only give me this one grace, Never to lose faith in you, Never to fear for myself, or to complain of the way You treat me" (*Growth*, 2005: 78-79).

Before reciting the "Act" the programme cautions that it is not intended for "unbelievers", "nor even automatically by all believers- but only those who, after

considerable reflection, are convinced they are ready to make this profoundly personal act” (*Growth*, 2005: 78). At every meeting observed this “Act” was recited by all. The middle part of GROW meetings is called the “Testing of Knowledge” and it tests members’ understanding of GROW information. After reflecting on textual material, the meeting proceeds to the fourth segment entitled “Resumed Interaction” when members who have not reported on their progress are invited to do so (in large meetings usually) or are encouraged to speak about GROW or any unresolved issues. Visiting people from the community are also allowed to speak at this point.

The final part of the meeting titled the “Closing Routine” starts with public announcements (i.e. upcoming GROW outings or fundraising events). Next, the person in charge of the “Weekly Evaluation Sheet” reads the check list out loud. Questions asked refer to one’s overall assessment of the meeting and its components. After the group goes through the list, the “Field Worker”, who may or may not be attendingⁱⁱⁱ, makes announcements or comments relating to regional or nation-wide GROW issues.

The GROW meeting ends with reading two passages from the blue book. All members usually stand up and link hands while reciting voluntarily. The first passage is officially called the “Prayer for Maturity”:

“True, Strong and Loving God, Teach me to see things as they really are, To accept myself and to trust fearlessly in Your care, To govern myself, and to find my peace in doing Your will, And, living or dying, to give myself back to You and to my fellowmen” (*Growth*, 2005: 79).

“The GROW Aspiration” is the final expression uttered by attending members at the end of the meeting in the same manner as the previous one. It reads: “May the spirit of friendship make us free and whole persons, and gentle builders of a free and whole community” (*Growth*, 2005: 79).

GROW – Text

Book Structure & Common Maxims

In the opening pages of the blue book called *The Programme of Growth to Maturity* (2005) the text is divided into three distinctive parts: “Beginning Growers”, “Progressing Growers” and “Seasoned Growers”. These parts are intended to correspond with one’s level of progression in regards to the programme and the twelve steps. Many of the common phrases referred to by those interviewed came from the “Beginning Growers” section. The first seventeen pages firmly grounds the basic principles and themes especially in regards to religious/spiritual messaging. The second part of the book for “Progressing Growers” tends to expand on topics and lines of questioning laid out in the opening section. This is helpful for those in the middle-stages of recovery. Lastly, the part for “Seasoned Growers” is intended for the members who are nearly recovered. The final few pages incorporate specific passages, phrases or prayers heavily used in group meetings with the following one directly addressing supernatural:

“1. Personal Value: No matter how bad my physical, mental, social or spiritual condition, I am always a human person loved by God and a connecting link between persons. I am still valuable; my life has a purpose; and I have my unique place and my unique part in my Creator’s own saving, healing and transforming” (*Growth* 2005:7).

For the purposes of this article we will omit discussion on psychological language and proceed to the spiritual and religious language used in the book.

Spiritual Language

As said before, the GROW programme’s is open to all denominations and is not specifically Catholic even though its founder was a Catholic Priest (*Growth*, 2005: 1). The blue book has an entire section dedicated to “Believers and Unbelievers in GROW” which explains how the programme is open to both and stresses how caring for human suffering is central to its programme (pp. 22-23). The topic first begins with a sentence that is indicative of GROW’s stance on belief:

“It is obvious from GROW group experience that those who have a very personal belief in a loving God and an after-life have resources for their own

mental health and for helping others in their most crucial needs which unbelievers do not have” (p. 22).

The book next states, “Most of us seem to fluctuate inconsistently between these opposites, but to be developing on the whole more towards one than the other” (p. 22). The book then attempts to sort out its conceivable spiritual bias:

“That is why, though GROW is profoundly spiritual and God centred, it can draw no clear line between believers and unbelievers; and some unbelievers make far better Growers... than some believers” (p. 22).

In expressing its form of spiritual neutrality, the section proceeds to expand on how prayers used in GROW meetings, as well as spiritual references, particularly to god, are voluntary and can be ignored and/or omitted if needed. The book offers a secular “Appendix” that explains how such spiritual terminology can be replaced with secular language (i.e. substituting the word ‘god’ with personal referencing or spiritual with ‘social’) (pp. 80-81). Administration and leaders within GROW are required to uphold this neutrality. Such a position seems difficult to maintain when god is included as a central factor in one’s recovery, according to GROW’s programme. In a section entitled, “How Do You Know You’ve Recovered?”, the third explanation reads:

“Your main habitual for facing life are built-in habit of personal maturity (understanding, acceptance, confidence, control, and love), accompanied by an increasing awareness of the presence and power of a loving God. Not the doctor, nor the pills, nor even the group” (p. 41).

However, the section on belief and unbelief advises those “who cannot bear to hear any expression of religious faith” that the secular “Appendix” can be used for unbelievers so that they may feel comfortable (pp. 22-23, p. 81).

Further, the blue book devotes a detailed section expanding on GROW’s stance on spirituality, belief in God and maturity via God. The first topic talks about “GROW’s Twofold Spirituality: Horizontal and Vertical”. The book states that GROW acknowledges two types of spirituality: “the ‘horizontal’ one, based on belief in persons, and the ‘vertical’ one’ based on belief in God” (p. 70). In relation to the former, the book associates this belief with the beginning “Principle of Personal Value”. It is explained how this principle came to represent a basic belief among Growers in the sense where members believe in one another and for oneself regardless

if they have a belief in God. This comradeship is expressed by means of the GROW Commitment discussed in the previous section. Next, it is stressed that belonging to GROW does not require a profession of religious belief or the imposition of belief in God as a condition of membership. Then the contents seem to lean more in the direction of a spiritual/religious messaging by means of explaining what they call a “natural link” between belief in people and a higher being:

“Nevertheless, there is a natural link and consistency (testified to by most Growers) between this primary belief in persons and belief in a supremely personal healing Power, Wisdom, and Love greater than ourselves. Hope for a spiritual destiny beyond death for ourselves, our loved ones and every human being goes along naturally with belief in a personal and loving God, just as the opposite primary belief- in dominant, impersonal forces of nature and environment- make it extremely hard or impossible to hold out hope for restoration and fulfilment for anyone beyond death” (pp. 69-70).

The GROW programme, as this section verifies, consists of two thresholds: humankind and God. This topic concludes with the realisation that belief in God, or the second threshold, is not enough, since true development must come holistically via the mind, body, heart, and spirit.

The subsequent section in GROW’s “Systems of Belief” first poses the question: “In Reality greater than man which energises in the universe, is there knowledge, love and provision for us persons?” (p. 71). The book provides “Belief in God” as the positive answer to this question. There are also two other possibilities to this question given in the text: atheistic and agnostic. It reads,

“The atheist says No: there is power but no personal intelligence and no loving providence above man. The agnostic says: it can never be known whether there is or not; so in practice we must carry on as if we are on our own” (p. 71).

The book labels these two answers as fixed positions or “systems of positive Unbelief” which is in opposition to “a God-centred orientation of thought, feeling, and action” (p. 71). A possible fourth option or re-interpretation of the agnostic that is hinted at is the idea of being a “mere Doubter or Half-believer”. The final option expands on the concept of “Believer”. The text states,

“Finally, the Believer is firmly convinced that above man, in the overall movement of life as a whole, there is **One Supreme Personal Being who knows and cares and powerfully provides for us**^{iv}. This Being he calls GOD. The believer’s faith in a personal God is usually linked with a further conviction concerning continuing personal life after death” (pp. 71-72).

The book then asks its members/ readers:

“...where do **you** see yourself? **Are you a Believer or an Unbeliever?** Or, if you are in the unstable middle region, **are you drifting further in Doubt or growing more towards definite Belief?**” (p. 72).

The final topic that is also illustrative of GROW’s seeming preference of spiritual messaging is the previously mentioned phrase “God ‘Improves’ as We Mature”. It begins by first stating how the idea of God seems to change over the years “as we grow from emotional inadequacy to maturity” (p. 73). The text goes on to clarify that one’s view of God helps to determine this process of improvement, “especially in relation to the suffering we have to endure” (p. 73). Next, it is distinguished between four possible views of God that “closely link our concept of the supreme reality with the way we think our lives are developing” (pp. 73-74):

- “1. The Overall Power is Impersonal or Evil”.
- “2. God is a Severe Taskmaster and Judge”.
- “3. God is a Kind Saviour, Healer and Teacher”.
- “4. God is a Supreme Friend and Lover”.

GROW – Individual Religiosity

From all combined interviews, particularly from the more “churched” participants, a variety of spiritual/religious activities were revealed: prayer, going to prayer meetings, meditation, talking to a priest, attending mass, religious conferences and pilgrimages, reciting “a deck of the rosary”, participating in faith healing, attending special devotions and novenas, attending confession, reading *The Bible* and interpreting sacred signs. When it comes to what activities were employed by each person, our findings seem to indicate that the elder participants were more likely to employ “churched” activities as listed above. The younger participants seemed to have a more extensive source of activities, specifically in terms of employing a la

carté and/or Eastern practices. We will review “churched and “non-churched” activities in order to have a clearer understanding of the differentiation between participants on the basis of their age and the choice of activities.

The participants who mentioned more “churched” activities are Vanessa, Max, Rick, Frank, and Lisa. Most of them are roughly middle-aged or older and all five mentioned attended national school, most went to secondary and just Lisa had a third-level education. Consequently, it is most likely they were influenced by the Catholic teachings in both public (formal education) and private (Catholic upbringing) spheres. In regards to their employed activities, they spoke mostly of prayer, attending mass and reading *The Bible*. Prayer is definitely held as the most significant activity specifically free prayer. However free prayer is not necessarily affiliated with an institutional source and could also be viewed as a “non-churched” activity. Vanessa described free-prayer as helpful in the sense that it offers great consolation: “I get great consolation from mass and from prayers”. Some reiterated this outcome describing how there is a comforting effect of prayer.

Attending mass ranked second in the list of “churched” activities. The ones who could be described as ‘highly religious’ or ‘committed believers’ in regards to frequently employing religious activities scored highest when it came to attending mass. Max and Lisa’s accounts fit this description. Max stated: “I do, I pray morning, noon, and night and I go to mass most days. I’m at home in a church, just at home in a church.” Unlike Max, Lisa was probably more affected by her connection to the church and religious activities and consequently has to pace the way in which she practices. Overall, many confirmed enjoyment of the socialising aspect of attending mass. Rick stated how “it’s a great help if you’re down and out with depression or down, somebody to listen and care and give you their time [at mass]”.

Lisa was able to greatly expand on her engagement with “churched” activities, in particular reading *The Bible*. Most other participants were not able to expand on this activity and indeed reading *The Bible* seemed to be one that is seldom employed. Nonetheless, Rick indistinctly remarked on how *The Bible* helped him saying “there are stories in it that would help me, so there is....parables. It drove it into me now

never to give up hope”. Max also recalled how stories from *The Bible*, particularly ‘the Sams’, have worked within his spiritual interpretation of sacred “signs” such as when he witnessed the twinkling reflection off the ocean and a full moon on Christmas Eve.

In relation to the “non-churched” participants (Jessica, Henry, Luke, Freddy, Will, most of which are single, college educated, and roughly in her upper twenties/ early thirties), we will largely rely upon Jessica’s experience as she was able to profoundly express her pluralistic version of spirituality. Interestingly though, when Jessica was very young she would spend many hours in the church when first dealing with her depression. She then expands on her transition into other spiritual avenues:

“I grew up Catholic and I was very religious as a child. I used to have alters and I was obsessed with the Virgin Mary... I lost that in my teens and throughout a good chunk of my 20’s. It’s only in the last couple of years that my faith has kind of come back. I think a lot about the mystical side of life... That’s why I’m not put off by the God thing or the prayers [in GROW]. To me they’re like a chant or a mantra or something.”

It is important to note how her youth seemed to play a factor in opening up her spiritual schema or framework. Due to the influence of her like-minded friends, which includes a Reiki master, Jessica has rekindled her faith using various spiritual practices. She comments on her hybrid approach stating “I’m not a devout to everything. Just take what I like from it...”. Consequently, Jessica employs many schools of spiritual thinking and activities including meditation, chanting exercises, muscle testing, yoga, kinesiology, chakra balancing and attends self-healing workshops. She particularly enjoys reading spiritual books especially Buddhist. Jessica confirms her preference for this spiritual approach saying, “that’s kind of what brought my faith back...”.

Certainly Jessica’s experiences and her extensive scope of religious and/or spiritual coping mechanisms illustrate diverse effects of secularisation. What is more, in regards to all other participants, the common activity which they all share, attending GROW, could be viewed as a “non-churched” activity. This shared activity also points towards to the changes brought about in religious authority structures. Of

course, Jessica's viewpoint as well as others', in terms of their belief system and coping activities, can also result in many difficulties. However this also depends if persons lean more in the "churched" or "non-churched" direction.

Jessica pointed out that she thought the structure of mass is out-dated. In addition, she remarked that she would not really talk to a priest and does not understand why they even give marriage counselling. Lisa also alludes to this suspicion or perceived unfriendliness of Catholic priests. She comments how some can be very unapproachable. In particular, she says that her current priest "doesn't really have the time [to talk to her] and I think he's a bit dismissive." However, Lisa also expresses that some priests can act "like a counsellor". Though, for the most part, the majority of participants did not really rely on talking to priest about their mental health problems.

Other than communicating with a priest, and the structure of mass, Freddy talked about how attending mass was difficult for him during a real low point in his mental health. He expands, "I had a lot of phobias about mass" and this was mostly on account of its social aspect. Freddy was able to challenge his fears of socialising and currently enjoys going to mass for that precise reason. Nevertheless, we can see how mass might also have an inhibiting factor.

Another issue hinted at by our participants, either overtly or implicitly, was a matter of distrust. Will remarks, "even though when I was young I went to the Christian Brothers, I was always close to God, always prayed a lot, always felt at home with God, even though he can give you some tough ones." What is interesting about Will's comment is how he stated, "even though" in relation to the Christian Brothers thus implying a negative experience when attending this school. Will reiterates a similar experience in more direct way. He recalls his time at the Christian Brothers school, and how "it was just the end of it, corporeal punishment in Ireland. Very strict, we used to get wacked. I'd go to mass, but I didn't go to mass with a Christian...". Luke similarly resolved, "I don't have much time, I have distrust for formal religion and organised religion".

According to our participants, outside of institutional matters, certain principles within the Church can also be a deterrent. Henry clearly addresses a concern of dogmatic thinking that can result from Catholic teachings:

“I suppose a part of that is I grew up in a very religious family, where the solution to every problem was always spiritual, never practical. It was always say a pray and you’ll be okay. I was totally against that because for me that was avoiding reality...So I did have a problem with that at the start, the spiritual side of it.”

However it is important to note how Henry, with a more non-religious approach, started to see the advantages of spirituality within the context of GROW. On the other hand Lisa, who was always spiritually inclined and who greatly adopted Catholic teachings, recalls how her constant need to attend mass and confession and pray all night offered her no peace.

Perhaps the combined noted difficulties in relation to personal belief, specifically a more “churched” version of belief and practice, contributed to our participants’ utilisation of alternative activities and sources for the purposes of coping. Attending GROW potentially constitutes the primary coping activity itself.

Discussion: GROW and Neo-secularisation

From the findings section on four levels of analysis, the background of the GROW organisation, the meetings, the text and individual religiosity, it is noticeable that this voluntary group and its members espouse strong religious connotations. Due to the prevalent Catholic ethos of the Irish society as well as over ninety five percent Catholic population it is safe to presume that the Catholic way of thinking and acting is strongly present in all facets of life. As Inglis (2007a) pointed out, regardless of the changing levels of belief, attendance of rituals or adherence to religious doctrines, Catholicism in Ireland is something that majority of population is socialised into adopting, it is a part of cultural heritage. But at same time, the way how Catholicism is being re-valued and re-shaped is something that needs closer attention both in terms of religiosity and its influence in the voluntary sector.

In relation to the voluntary group GROW, it tends to act as an alternative authority system not only in relation to its role in mental coping and support but also in regard to its spiritual/religious messaging. When looking into the foundation of the group, it was established by a Catholic priest with incorporated elements for recovery from Alcoholics Anonymous' programmes. Although officially claiming to be non-denominational and welcoming of secular viewpoints, its material used in meetings as well as its reliance on ritualistic behaviour based on a joint recital of the sections from material that heavily reference god, it is difficult to imagine how a non-religious person can partake in such rituals by repeating a secular version of the same sections.

On the level of GROW as an organisation, it could be said that its official non-denominational stance is there to on one hand attract a wider audience and on the other hand to partake in financial assistance from the government. The second point is relevant here since GROW is supported by the HSE and the Department of Health and Children. As a part of religious sector, it would be more tied to religious authority elites' demands in both contents of the material used as well as particular religious messaging. However, by adopting an official non-denominational position while incorporating religious messaging in its contents, it succeeds in not only attracting wider membership but also influencing those less religiously inclined to adopt a spiritual dimension as Henry's example shows. Henry's primary socialisation into a religious worldview left him antagonistic to the spiritual solution to practical problems but with his continuous membership in GROW he managed to distinguish the spiritual element of GROW from religious, Catholic teachings that he perceived as dogmatic.

Analysis of the main GROW text, *The Programme of Growth to Maturity* (2005) reveals that its conceptualisation of the sacred is the foremost theme employed. In the section on "Believers and Unbelievers in GROW", the opening sentence links personal belief in god and after-life with individual recovery and support for others. Although there is a secular appendix where any reference to spirituality/religiosity can be substituted with non-religious/spiritual wording, the previous example is a case of favouritism of religious messaging. On the account of the GROW's non-denominational base, why not have the non-religious text in the main part of the book

and religious messaging in the appendices? Previous example is also an illustration of how the non-denominational, voluntary group uses religious messaging with reference to the supernatural to posit itself as on one hand an alternative (religious) authority system and on the other hand filling in the emerging spiritual gap created by distrust towards the Catholic Church. In this context, GROW clearly serves a function of the authority system offering what the Catholic Church cannot fulfil: a venue that provides programme for recovery and support for the people with mental health problems and religious/spiritual dimension unpolluted by excessive dogmatism. The majority of participants recounted perceived priests' unfriendliness, dismissiveness and inapproachability to people with mental health problems. This negative attitude on behalf of the priests could also be due to their inexperience and lack of training in this area. But it is also a wider issue for the Catholic Church in terms of its position on variety of health issues such mental health problems, disability, In Vitro fertilisation to name just a few.

Another point related to the blue book or the main text used in the meetings is about the centrality of references made to god. Although every leader and local branch administration needs to uphold spiritual neutrality by emphasising the non-denominational character of the organisation and the secular version of the wording in the texts used for the meetings, this is highly problematic to maintain in everyday practice for at least two reasons: one, frequent referencing to god is implicated in a concept of recovery and, two, non-religious value systems such as agnostic or atheistic are phrased as systems of unbelief therefore made questionable on the continuum of belief-doubt-unbelief where 'belief in god' is the answer to the question about reality, knowledge and love that transcends everyday life.

There is a further point to be made about religious referencing in *The Programme of Growth to Maturity* in relation to the concept of socialisation. In a society where a Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of public and private life, GROW becomes an additional venue or channel through which members uphold broader cultural (Catholic) values. It seems as nearly a natural extension of primary Catholic socialisation with the added bonus of mental health care and support with spiritual dimension that aids in what is considered holistic development through the mind,

body, heart and spirit. Different concepts of god (i.e. loving, healing or judgemental), notions on belief and unbelief together with link made between belief in god and personal (emotional) development all support the point made by Grant, O'Neill and Stephens (2003) about the spiritualisation of secular organisations or reintroduction of spirituality in a secular context. It is a highly relevant point to make in relation to neo-secularisation theory in that the laicisation taking place in religious organisations is another aspect of secularising religious authority structures while the relocation of authority from religious to non-religious settings and the further spiritualisation of secular organisations point towards the transference of loyalties to alternative authority structures. It is not only about GROW using material with religious connotations, but it is also about GROW's (strategic) repositioning outside of the influence of religious authority structures that helps it attract and maintain members who, as our study shows, might be disappointed or dissatisfied with the prevalent religious authority structures. Of course, we need to acknowledge that GROW was primarily founded around providing support and help in recovery from mental health problems. Yet it also provides an additional service in the form of spiritual guidance. The question is why there is a need for spiritual guidance within a non-religious organisation? However, the idea of a non-denominational organisation which does not exclude a spiritual dimension therefore extends GROW's mission of mental health support agency to link recovery with aspects of religiosity and spirituality.

The interview findings support the above claims in that GROW is not only a support group for people dealing with the issues of mental health but it is also a setting highly conducive to the respondents' existing or potential religious/spiritual leanings. For some of the participants, the conceptualisation of GROW's spiritual messaging appears to be processed under a Catholic perspective, at least to some degree. Such an effect would likely be due to their socialisation in Catholic teachings. Nonetheless, this processing takes place within the GROW environment and this indicates how religious authority in Ireland has profoundly altered to the extent that GROW, an organisation that emphasises self-help, is able to utilise religious messaging. In addition, this voluntary organisation has been able to offer and support "non-churched" or non-denominational spiritual activities to its members therefore providing extended religious and spiritual menu.

For those that employed more “churched” activities they mainly listed prayer, reading *The Bible* and attending mass. Prayer is considered particularly important due to its ability to offer comfort and “consolation”. It seems mass helps balance the very interpersonal activity of prayer. Many of the five “churched” participants greatly varied in terms of the frequency of attending mass. Together with Lisa and Max, most participants who leaned in the “churched” direction appeared to attend mass for socialising and networking. Inglis (1998) may view this experience as a part of the Irish Catholic habitus in which people can acquire social capital wherein they also solidify social ties. Outside mass, the development of social ties is something that seems to occur in the context of GROW meetings. Along the same lines of offering a social venue, attending mass was noted to be enjoyable on account of its neighbourly atmosphere.

In addition to mass, reading *The Bible* assists in disseminating a positive attitude by offering a profound message of hope. Some of our participants verified how this message is one that greatly helps motivate those who are suffering. It would seem from Max’s description that *The Bible* can also help decode these mystical and abstract occurrences while simultaneously offering a suitable language in which to articulate these experiences. This in turn offers meaning to sacred incidents. Luckmann (1967), Rappaport (1999) and Bell (1992) all touched upon the similar objectification of the sacred cosmos as well as how abstractions are made substantial and the manifestations of symbolic signs and signals interpreted.

Aside from the “churched” activities and their respective significance, Jessica’s broad account was illustrative of the expansive “non-churched” practices. Her penchant for more Eastern influenced interpretation of spirituality might very well come down to its bodily emphasis. Catholicism does not stress an overall bodily interpretation of spirituality except arguably in “communion”. Yet it was interesting to see that Jessica has not totally abandoned older “churched” activities such as mass as she mentioned how she believes that the structure of mass needs to be revised yet still feels that the practice exudes “good energy”.

All participants look outside of “churched” activities and engaging in GROW’s “non-churched” activities for the shared purpose of coping with their mental health problems. Furthermore GROW meetings along with GROW text, in terms of its structure, interaction and messaging, seems to have the potential to function in a ritualistic manner. Also, all participants engage with a variety of coping activities, outside of GROW according to so-called “churched” or “non-churched” spiritual affiliations. This categorisation usually corresponded with one’s age, the younger being more “non-churched”. These findings, especially the latter category, would also reinforce Luckmann’s (1967) and Dobbelaere and Jagodzinski’s (1995) assumption how the ‘official’ model of religion may become altered along with each generation. The elder generation would have been socialised more in formal religious activities and a “religiously rigid” (Culver in Hood *et al* 1996: 426) Catholic habitus. In contrast, the younger may have grown up in a more pluralistic environment, hence their a la carté approach to spiritual matters. Certainly this points towards the idea that in Ireland we do live in Wilson’s (1992) “mixed society” or what Dobbelaere (1999) describes as the co-existence of secular and sacred codes and beliefs.

Though in regards to theory of neo-secularisation, it is clear to see from GROW members’ revelations that negotiation between Catholic religious authority and GROW’s authority structures is taking place although the Catholic ethos is operating in such segmented sectors of the social spectrum as well. In this process of negotiation, various levels of the employment of religion as a positive coping mechanism emerge. Yet there are definitely limitations and problems when it comes to using such coping mechanisms, depending on one’s respective relationship to religious and/or spiritual authority.

As already addressed, when it comes to “churched” religious practices and belief, certain difficulties or limitations can arise as a result of this form of worship. Considering how all our participant referenced, either directly or indirectly, as being brought up in the Catholic faith, we are inclined to conclude that these consequential difficulties relate to attitudes towards the Catholic Church. In regards to attending mass it was reported how this environment is not always conducive to improving one’s mental health. Freddy’s experience in particular illustrates how social settings

can also exacerbate stress. Furthermore, from Will's, and Luke's respective accounts, we can also see how the issue of institutional distrust is a very current one. The scandals within the Church seem to have impacted people's approach to and utilisation of institutional religion. The relocation of authority structures seems to be taking place as a consequence of the various process such as intra-institutional mismanagement of the Catholic Church, the perception of alternative organisations (like GROW) as more sympathetic and accommodating to the needs of the mentally ill and the individualisation of choices. Henry's aversion of Catholic dogmatism is an example of a strong leaning towards a profane or secular worldview although even he accepts GROW's spiritual/religious messaging, therefore relocating an adherence from religious to seemingly non-religious authority structures.

Conclusions

Conceivably GROW, as an alternative authority that officially stresses a non-denominational viewpoint, is able to reinforce a diverse approach towards engaging with religious and/or spiritual coping mechanisms. What is more, GROW's legitimisation and extension of a Catholic ethos supports neo-secularisation claims as well as claims of its critics in which loyalty is being shifted from declining religious authority structures to more levelled spiritual attitudes and activities employed by alternative authority structures such as GROW. It seems that the very existence of GROW as a healing-orientated organisation that focuses on infirmities of mental health problems could be testimony of how far the pervasive Catholic ethos extends. This might explain why our participants chose to attend GROW despite their ostensible differences in regards to spiritual orientation and practices. Additionally, the principles reflected in GROW might already match those that our participants are acquainted with because both are influenced by a Catholic ethos to some extent. Overall, this paper supports the idea that not only are alternative authority structures emerging (both religious and secular/non-denominational) but also that these structures are reproducing the Catholic ethos that their members might not wish to fully endorse.

References:

- Andersen K., Lavan A. 2007 'Believing in God but not Obeying the Church: Being a Catholic in Ireland and Poland in the 1990s'. pp. 187-216. In *Changing Ireland in International Comparison*. Edited by Betty Hilliard and Maire Nic Ghiolla Phadraig. Dublin: The Liffey Press.
- Bell C. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bellah R.N. 1971 'Between Religion and Science' in *The Culture of Unbelief*. Edited by R. Caporale and A. Grumelli. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Berger P. L. 1992 *A Far Glory*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bruce S. 1993 'Religion and Rational Choice: A critique of Economic Explanations of Religious Behaviour'. *Sociology of Religion* 54:193-205.
- Casanova J. 1994 *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chaves M. 1994 'Secularization as Declining Religious Authority'. *Social Forces* 72,3: 749-774.
- Corish M. 1996 'Aspects of the Secularisation of Irish Society 1958-1996'. pp. 138-172. *Faith and Culture in the Irish Context*. Edited by Eoin G. Cassidy. Dublin: Veritas.
- Crippen T. 1988 'Old and New Gods in the Modern World: Toward a Theory of Religious Transformation'. *Social Forces*. 67:316-336.
- Dobbelaere K., Jagodzinski W. 1995 'Religious Cognitions and Beliefs'. pp.197-217 in *Beliefs in Government. Volume 4: The Impact of Values* edited by J. W. van Deth and E. Scarbrough. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dobbelaere K. 1999 'Towards an Integrated Perspective of the Processes Related to the Descriptive Concept of Secularization'. *Sociology of Religion*. 60,3:229-247.
- Dowling T. 2000 'Young Catholic Adults in Ireland'. pp. 50-69. In *Young Catholics at the New Millennium. The Religion and Morality of young Adults in Western Countries*. Edited by John Fulton et.al. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Fahey T. 2002 'Is Atheism Increasing? Ireland and Europe Compared'. pp. 46-66. in

- Measuring Ireland: Discerning Values and Beliefs* edited by Eoin G. Cassidy.
Dublin: VERITAS.
- Glasner P.E. 1977 *The Sociology of Secularisation: A Critique of a Concept*. London:
Routledge.
- Greeley A.M. 1973 *The Persistence of Religion*. London: SCM Press.
- Greeley A.M. Ward C. 2003 'A "Secularized" Ireland'. pp. 155-187. *Religion in
Europe at the end of the Second Millennium*. Edited by Andrew M. Greeley.
New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.
- Hadden J.K. 1987 'Towards Desacralising Secularisation Theory'. *Social Forces*
65:587-611.
- Hodder I. 2003 'The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture'. pp 155-
175 in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Edited by N.K.
Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln. London: Sage Publications: London.
- Hood R.W. et al. 1996 *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 2nd
Ed, New York: Guilford.
- Inglis T. 1998 *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern
Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Inglis T. 2001 'Irish Civil Society: From Church to Media Domination'. pp 49-
67 in *Religion and Politics: East-West Contrasts from Contemporary Europe*.
Edited by Tom Inglis, Zdzislaw Mach & Rafal Mazanek. Dublin: University
College Dublin Press.
- Inglis T. 2007a 'Catholic Identity in Contemporary Ireland: Belief and Belonging to
Tradition'. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22,2:205-220.
- Inglis T. 2007b 'Individualisation and Secularisation in Catholic Ireland'. pp. 67-82.
In *Contemporary Ireland. A Sociological Map*. Edited by Sara O'Sullivan.
Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Inglis T. 2007c 'The Religious Field in Contemporary Ireland: Identity, Being
Religious and Symbolic Domination'. Pp. 111-134. *Ireland Beyond
Boundaries. Mapping Irish Studies in the Twenty-first Century*. Edited by Liam
Harte and Yvonne Whelan. London: Pluto.
- Jerolmack C., Porpora D. 2004 'Religion, Rationality, and Experience: A Response to
the New Rational Choice Theory of Religion'. *Sociological Theory* 22, 1:140-
160.

- Keogh D. 2007 'The Catholic Church in Ireland since the 1950s'. pp. 93-149. in *The Church Confronts Modernity. Catholicism since 1950 in the United States, Ireland & Quebec*. Edited by Leslie Woodcock Tentler. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Luckmann T. 1967 *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Luckmann T. 1983 *Life World and Social Realities*. London: Heineman.
- Luckmann T. 1990 'Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion'. *Sociological Analysis*. 50,2:127-138.
- Lofland J. and Lofland L.H. 1995 *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. California: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Martin D. 1969 *The Religious and the Secular*. London: Routledge.
- Martin D. 2005 *On Secularization. Towards a Revised General Theory*. Hants: Ashgate.
- Powell F., Guerin D. 1997 *Civil Society and Social Policy: Voluntarism in Ireland*. Dublin: A&A Farmar.
- Rappaport R. 1999 *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stark R., Bainbridge W.S. 1996 *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Smith H.W. 1981 *Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Ward C. 2002 'Intimations of Immorality: An Analysis of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 1998'. pp. 67-93. In *Measuring Ireland: Discerning Values and Beliefs* edited by Eoin G. Cassidy. Dublin: Veritas.
- Wilson B.R. 1966 *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment*. London: Watts.
- Wilson B.R. 1982 *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson B. R. 1992. *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, London: Routledge
- Yamane D. 1997 'Secularisation on Trial: In Defence of a Neosecularisation Paradigm'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36,1:109-122.

ⁱ We will primarily focus on the blue book known as *The Program of Growth to Maturity* (2005) since it is held as the central text used in GROW during meetings. When further referencing this text we will shorten the title to *Growth*.

ⁱⁱ See GROW's website: www.grow.ie.

ⁱⁱⁱ The "Field Worker" tends to rotate between different groups and is not always present at every group in the region that he or she manages.

^{iv} We are quoting this in bold text because this is exactly how it appears in the *Growth* (2005).