From the Chair

I hope you are enjoying the rhythm of summer (except for our colleagues south of the equator)! Our association continues to be a vibrant intellectual community for the sociological study of religion. I look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia in August for the ASA meetings. In this issue, we have two features that are well worth reading.

First, Mark Chaves gives us a look back on 20 years of the National Congregations Study, an update on his latest research project studying clergy in the United States, and a few reflections on the state of the field. We thank Mark for his willingness to share his thoughts with us.

Second, we remember our colleague and friend Mary Ellen Konieczny, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame, who died on February 24, 2018. The stories and memories shared here by students and colleagues speak for themselves. I am grateful for all I learned from Mary Ellen as a co-author and friend and send love on all of our behalf to her husband Chris and sons Peter and John.

A memorial for Mary Ellen will take place during the ASR meetings in Philadelphia: August 12, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM in the Paris Ballroom on the 2nd floor in the Sofitel Philadelphia Hotel (120 South 17th St). Lunch will be provided.

Also included here are details of the panels and roundtables planned for the meetings in August. I hope to see many of you there as we have a wonderful line up. Many thanks to your section officers who did the hard work of planning and scheduling!

Wendy Cadge, Chair

Communications Update

The ASA Sociology of Religion Section is now on Twitter, please follow us today @ASA_Religion. We are also delighted to announce our participation in a new social media partnership with the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR), the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), and the Religious Research Association (RRA). You can follow the latest news from all of these organizations at The Wheelhouse: Social Science and Religion Network, on Twitter @wheelhousessr and on Facebook @wheelhousessr.

From the Editor

A big thanks for your patience waiting for this newsletter to come out! I think it was well worth the wait. It shows the incredible breadth and depth of working taking place. And a big thanks to Wendy for her work as our section chair. At ASA, we will welcome Melissa Wilde as her replacement.

David Eagle
An Interview with Mark Chaves

Mark Chaves is Professor of Sociology, Religious Studies, and Divinity at Duke University. Among his many important contributions to the sociology of religion is the now 20-year-old National Congregations Study (NCS). In this interview, I talk with Mark about the NCS, a new project studying congregational leaders, and his thoughts about the state of the field.

DE: Thanks for taking this time to talk with me. To start with, take us back to the late 1990s, to the start of the National Congregations Study. How did the project get off the ground? Were people skeptical?

MC: No, I think there was pretty immediate enthusiasm for the project. The idea occurred to me and then it came together very quickly, because the stars aligned in a way. I remember the moment very vividly. I was reading Organizations In America, by Peter Marsden, Arne Kalleberg, and Joe Spaeth. They had used the GSS to identify people’s employers and produce a nationally representative sample of employing organizations. I was reading that book and a light bulb appeared: “We could do this with congregations. It’s the exact same thing.” Just by coincidence, in 1997, I was on a committee, chaired by Mike Hout, to construct a GSS religion module. I talked to Mike about asking GSS respondents to name their congregations as part of that module, and then to Chris Coble at Lilly about funding a survey of the congregations that were named. They were both enthusiastic about the idea, and the project was off the ground. But I didn’t imagine I’d still be doing it 20 years later!

DE: What major contributions has the NCS made to broader conversations about religion in America? What are the big things it’s contributed?

MC: I think what we’ve learned about change over time is important. Documenting increasing ethnic diversity in congregations has been important and has received a lot of attention. Also, the NCS has documented the increasing concentration of people in larger churches, something that wasn’t clear 20 years ago. Beyond tracking various kinds of trends, probably the most significant way in which the NCS has contributed to broader conversations concerns what we’ve learned about congregations’ role in our social welfare system – congregations’ social services and community activities. That’s mainly because the first NCS more or less coincided with the second Bush administration’s Faith Based Initiative, which made congregations’ social service activities a huge topic of conversation. The NCS was able to correct lots of misunderstandings about the nature of church involvement in social services and was able to provide lots of solid knowledge about what they do – and also about the limits of what they do. That’s probably the piece that
was most influential outside the sociology of religion.

**DE:** The fourth wave of the NCS is being fielded this summer and fall. What new content is there?

**MC:** Each NCS after the first has been about two thirds repeated questions and about one third new content. In 2018 we’ve got more detail about technology use in congregations. There’s also a set of questions about congregational response to natural disasters, which we haven’t asked about before. There is more detail about staff, for example questions about how many staff people specialize in various kinds of work, in an effort to learn more about the division of labor inside congregations and the kinds of work and positions congregations prioritize. Obviously this applies almost entirely to large congregations with specialized staff, but these kinds of congregations are increasingly prominent. There’s also some new questions about engagement with the environment.

Each time we try to ask some questions about issues of the day. In 2018, for example, we will ask if congregations have had classes or groups or events focused on police-community relations. There is more on congregations’ health promoting activities. And we’re asking for more detail about their political activities, including what issues they’re involved with, which side of the issues they are on, and if they would be inclined to endorse political candidates if IRS rules about that were changed. We also are asking whether they have declared themselves to be sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants, or considered doing so, and whether they sponsoring refugees, or considered doing so.

**DE:** Has anything changed methodologically with this wave?

**MC:** No, it’s the same model. The main possible change we considered was whether we could construct an adequate sampling frame from various online sources -- Google Maps and the like. There could be a significant cost savings if this was possible. The bottom line was that online sources still are not comprehensive enough to substitute for the hyper-network approach that we use. You’d miss 15% of congregations, and that wouldn’t be a random 15%. So the hyper-network approach is still the best way to construct a nationally representative sample of congregations.

**DE:** Switching to the new study you’re getting ready to field, the Templeton Foundation has funded a national survey of clergy. How did this come about?

**MC:** I’ve thought for a while that studying the clergy associated with NCS congregations would be an obvious complement to the NCS. We have a nationally representative sample of congregations, which means we also have a nationally representative sample of clergy who work in congregations. Jack Carroll and Cynthia Woolever have used hyper-network samples of congregations to sample clergy, but until now we haven’t used the NCS in this way.

The John Templeton Foundation saw the value in this extension of the NCS, and it is funding what we’re calling the National Survey of Religious Leaders. It will be a survey of the primary leaders of NCS congregations plus the paid ministerial staff beyond the main leader. It’s very tricky to define the relevant population of staff once you go beyond the primary leader. The primary leader is fairly easy to identify, and previous clergy surveys mainly have limited attention to primary or sole congregational leaders. But we are trying to construct a nationally representative sample of people who do religious work in congregations – not just the main leader. The study will be focused on them, but obviously we also will be able to link to the NCS data.

**DE:** What changes do you anticipate finding among clergy?

**MC:** I’m not sure. We’re looking at a lot of the career and job characteristics that Jack Carroll examined in his 2001 survey, including education, career trajectories, whether or not they have other jobs, and so on. I think those data will be very interesting, since they will speak to concerns about the changing nature of this occupation and this profession. We should be able to assess some of that change by comparing our results with Jack’s results from 2001. Examining how the gender composition of the clergy has changed also will be important.

Beyond changes, I suspect there will be a lot of interest in clergy political attitudes and behaviors. We’ll ask questions about political affiliation, who they voted for in 2016, and what political activities they are directly involved in as individuals. Those responses should be very interesting.

**DE:** Switching to a last set of questions, I want to talk more broadly about the sociology of religion as a field. As you know, there are worries about the subdiscipline losing influence or declining in importance. How would you assess the state of sociology of religion? Are these concerns about sociology of religion in particular, or are they about sociology in general?
MC: I do have concerns about the academic job market in the sociology of religion. It certainly seems that the sociology of religion is not a high priority area for sociology departments to hire in. I don’t think that’s new. I think it’s always been the case that very few sociology departments have targeted hiring in the sociology of religion. What I think might be new is that fewer departments are pursuing open area searches in which a sociologist of religion can compete on the same playing field as people in other areas. It seems like more searches are limited to subfields that are popular at the moment. I don’t know if it’s really true that there are fewer open area searches than used to be, but if that impression is correct it puts sociologists of religion at a disadvantage.

DE: Intellectually, how would you assess the field?

MC: There’s lots of good work happening, but at the moment we don’t have an organizing debate. We had that for a while regarding secularization, and we had it for a while around rational choice theory and religion. There’s pros and cons to not having an organizing debate. On the one hand, we’re not distracted by a single debate that can suck a lot of air out of the room, and we can get on with doing good empirical work on various topics, and learning a lot from that work. On the other hand, debates can be energizing, and not having one that lots of people are engaged in can make the field seem more scattered and less coherent.

DE: I wonder if part of the problem is that religion is a fuzzy term, particularly in sociology. Religion can be understood pretty broadly whereas concepts like poverty or health disparities, for example, are more concrete.

MC: We just had a unit in my sociology of religion graduate seminar on “everyday religion” or “lived religion” in which this came up. It seems to me that there’s a movement of sorts to expand the definition of religion – to consider as “religious” more kinds of activities, perspectives, and habits than we would have in the past, maybe except when we were teaching Durkheim. I sometimes think that this impulse to expand religion’s definition comes in part from an effort to give us something to study in a context in which more traditional religion seems to be weaker and less important. I worry about that impulse because I think there’s such a thing as a concept of religion that’s so broad that it’s empty.

I don’t think we should abandon traditional religious institutions and the traditional contexts and ways in which religion is expressed as central concerns in the sociology of religion. I’m struck that research looking for religion outside of traditional religious institutions has a hard time finding much of it – unless, again, religion is defined so broadly that almost anything would count. It seems to me that a major finding of research on lived religion is that the lived religion that is happening outside traditional religious places mainly involves people who are involved in congregations and are pretty traditionally religious. I know I’m oversimplifying, but I worry that we’re moving too quickly away from the study of more traditional religion. I don’t think we should assume that there’s a lot of religion happening outside traditional religious institutions, and I worry that going too far in trying to find it will lead us to define ourselves out of the subject matter that’s distinctive for us. If religion is broadened to include any time people feel transcendence, or connected to nature, or part of a group, or involved in activity that’s deeply meaningful to them, or something along those lines, I don’t think we’re left with anything distinctive to study.

DE: Much of your work has focused on secularization. Where is that debate today?

MC: I would say that this debate has shifted several times. Through the 1970s, pretty much everyone in the field believed in some version of the idea that modernity is unfriendly to religion. That changed in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Really, it was completely flipped, with no one believing anymore in secularization. The main idea in this phase, and probably the most commonly held view today, is that we should talk about religious change rather than about decline. But I think this debate is shifting again, with recent work giving us reason to think again that some version of more or less classical secularization theory is probably true, and was abandoned too quickly. However, I also think there is fatigue with debates about secularization. All things considered, I think the relationship between religion and modernity remains and should remain one of our central concerns.

DE: Any advice for new sociology of religion PhD students who are starting their search for a dissertation topic?

Look for questions in the intersection of religion and something else -- religion and politics, religion and culture, religion and organizations, religion and race, religion and gender, religion and whatever. A lot of the interesting work in sociology of religion takes place in one or the other of those intersections. And that kind of work also can speak to audiences outside of the sociology of religion, which will increase your market value as well as lead you to important contributions.
On February 24th, Mary Ellen Mary Konieczny, the Henkels Family Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame, died as a result of complications from cancer. Mary Ellen is remembered as a fine sociologist of religion, a wonderful colleague, a great teacher and mentor, and a close friend to many in the discipline.

The will be a special memorial for Mary Ellen held at the Annual Association for the Sociology of Religion meetings in Philadelphia. August 12, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM in the Paris Ballroom on the 2nd floor in the Sofitel Philadelphia Hotel (120 South 17th St). Lunch will be provided.

Below are some tributes to Mary Ellen that from her colleagues, and current and former students.

Jeffrey Guhin
Assistant Professor of Sociology at UCLA

The sociology of religion is a relatively small subfield, and one with relatively dense ties, given our various conferences and the solidarity from the dearth of jobs. And so, this past weekend, many of us were stunned to hear that our friend Mary Ellen Konieczny, a professor at Notre Dame, has died. There’s so much to say about Mary Ellen, but one thing that might not be mentioned is that she was a model for those of us who are religious in the academy, especially Catholics like me. She wrote about polarizations in the Catholic Church, always in an effort to bring people together (her books on this, both her ethnography and her edited volume, are really excellent). I always assumed she was progressive like me, though I’m not sure we ever talked about the specific issues. Yet I was struck how many people from all across the Catholic Church expressed sorrow about her loss. She knew how to speak to everyone so that they felt heard and understood, and she did so in a way that was neither superficial nor unchallenging. That’s a skill that’s increasingly hard to pull off in today’s Catholic Church, and, for that matter, in today’s America. Because, of course, the work Mary Ellen was doing wasn’t really about Catholicism: she was too good of a sociologist for that. It was about social life, and her next projects were all extensions of her interests in how people can work within and beyond cultural differences, much of it not really about Catholics.
Yet she still wanted to work on Catholics. The Church mattered to her, unapologetically. I asked her once about the fact that she does a kind of “mesearch” and she said it was a challenge to get a kind of critical distance, but it was important to her, and she just found it interesting. I intentionally haven’t studied Catholics because I’m worried I’m too close, yet I hope eventually I have the courage to study my own worlds with the simultaneous compassion and dispassion that Mary Ellen achieved. And while I’ve never really had a problem with sociologists studying their own identities and backgrounds, Mary Ellen’s ability to make a real difference in the Catholic world is proof how much it matters for sociologists to bring our own skills back to our own places.

Yet Mary Ellen was so much more than her work. I was talking to her at a conference a few months ago, and we discussed a really amazing paper she had just published at Sociology of Religion on being gay at a Catholic university. As usual, she was more excited for her coauthors (Robbee Wedow, Landon Schnabel, and Lindsey K D Wedow) than for herself. She was an incredibly passionate mentor to many, as well as a devoted colleague and academic citizen. And she had a husband and two sons, a community in South Bend, a whole world.

Every time someone I know dies, I think of this poem, What the Living Do, by Marie Howe. Its final stanzas are worth sharing here:

But there are moments, walking, when I catch a glimpse of myself in the window glass, say, the window of the corner video store, and I’m gripped by a cherishing so deep

for my own blowing hair, chapped face, and unbuttoned coat that I’m speechless: I am living. I remember you.

Originally posted at orgtheory.net.

Mark Chaves
Professor of Sociology at Duke University

I first met Mary Ellen when she contacted me to talk about the sociology of religion and the various graduate programs to which she was applying. Although she was not yet in a PhD program, we were almost exactly the same age, and we hit it off. We stayed in touch as she began her graduate work at the University of Chicago and, when I received funding in 1997 to conduct the first National Congregations Study (NCS), she was the first person I called because I wanted her to be the Head Research Assistant on this project. She accepted and, along with Kraig Beyerlein and Emily Barman, we worked together to get the NCS off the ground.

Mary Ellen was the perfect person for the job. Her contributions were legion. She helped formulate the project’s substantive questions, shape the content of the questionnaire, manage a massive pretesting process, analyze data, and write about the results. Mary Ellen’s Catholic commitments and connections also helped us obtain endorsements of the NCS from Catholic leaders across the country. It wasn’t easy to say no to her. In these ways, and others, she made the NCS better than it would have been without her.

Mary Ellen’s work on the NCS, significant though it was, really was only a sideline for her. Her primary intellectual preoccupation was how people involved in religious institutions experience and help create particular kinds of religious cultures. As an outside member of Mary Ellen’s dissertation committee, I saw another set of her many talents: her tremendous skills as an observer, interviewer, and interpreter of religious life and institutions. Mary Ellen made new and fascinating discoveries on a subject -- American Catholicism -- about which much already was known. That is not easy to do, but she was able to do it because she was original, creative, and rigorous, and because she put her heart and soul into her field work. I learned a lot from her, and I was looking forward to learning still more from her long-term research on religious culture and conflict at the United States Air Force Academy.

Mary Ellen was a constructive, lively, intellectually stimulating, and downright fun presence in any group, in any setting. Catching up with her was a highlight of many a SSSR meeting. She enriched the sociology of religion community in ways that go far beyond her published work. I’m proud to have called her my student but, even more, I’m fortunate to have called her my friend. I will miss her.

Tia Noelle Pratt
Visiting Instructor at St. Joseph’s University

I didn’t know Mary Ellen Konieczny as long or as well as many others in our community. Nevertheless, I feel
her loss profoundly. Her passing feels like a death in the family because in a way, it is. Since the Sociology of Religion is a small community, while at the ASR, SSSR/RRA, or ASA Religion Section meetings, it often feels like everyone knows each other. And so it feels like I knew Mary Ellen longer and better than I actually did.

All of the remembrances I’ve read about Mary Ellen over this past week talked about her ability to build connections and encourage others. What I will always remember about her echoes this beautiful sentiment. Both Mary Ellen and I participated in The American Parish Project symposium on The Sociology of the Catholic Parish in June 2015. During that weekend, I decided that I would write a book. The idea went from supremely daunting to faintly possible because of a conversation I had with Mary Ellen. I had become certain that the work I was doing needed to become a book, but I didn’t know how to get started. After Mary Ellen talked me through the initial steps including who I should talk to and organizations I should become familiar with (she was always building connections), I said, “I know it’s important to have the right publisher, but I don’t know what I should even look for or how to start.” With a wave of her hand, Mary Ellen swept away my worry and said, “I can help you with that.” With that I was off to the races!

Mary Ellen was incredibly kind, supportive, and encouraging to me. Never more so than the last time I saw her at the 2017 ASA meetings in Montreal. She attended a session where I was a panelist. After the session ended we had a chance to speak. She had learned from a mutual friend that I was having a difficult time professionally (like I said, everyone knows each other!). During our brief conversation, her words gave me the energy I needed to begin the new academic year with a renewed sense of purpose. That renewed sense of purpose allowed me to pursue my work with an intensity I thought was lost until Mary Ellen helped me find it.

I will miss Mary Ellen’s scholarship tremendously, but will miss her presence and friendship even more.

Omar McRoberts
Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago

Mary Ellen Konieczny was probably the first student I ever worked with who would become a true colleague. When we met, she was already well underway with her remarkable dissertation research (now the sensitive, deeply insightful book Spirit’s Tether) on congregation-level framings of moral issues among American Catholics. Eventually I would join her dissertation committee. In the many intensive discussions we shared during that time, Mary Ellen embodied a uniquely grounded intellectual brilliance, and an unwavering commitment to sociology as a path of human understanding and transformation. I would watch these qualities blossom in her professional life as a universally loved teacher, mentor, and scholarly interlocutor. Mary Ellen knew that the pursuit of Sociology should do more than make us “smart” -- it should make us ever more wise, generous, and positively impactful. She will be remembered not only for her scholarly contributions, but for her inspiring personal presence -- a remarkable example for us all.

Robbee Wedow
PhD Candidate at the University of Colorado, Boulder

Mary Ellen, my undergraduate advisor at Notre Dame, was unquestionably my inspiration for becoming a sociologist. Her undergraduate sociological theory class, one of my very favorite classes while at Notre Dame, was conducted at the level of a graduate seminar. She cared passionately for theory, and she worked incredibly hard to develop her undergraduate students into junior theorists. Her insight into our discipline’s classical foundations is what first engaged my sociological imagination and what subsequently led me to choose her as my undergraduate sociology advisor.

The challenging project we picked as my thesis examined the intersection of religion and sexual orientation. We were both quite devoted to the project, and the topic has become even more timely and important in the years following my graduation. We continued working on it together for several years into graduate school, and last year we published the article in Sociology of Religion (titled “‘I’m Gay and I’m Catholic’: Negotiating Two Complex Identities at a Catholic University”). She was incredibly proud of the project and of me, and I think the work we did together in that article speaks to her devotion for making the Catholic Church a place of broad inclusion. I have carried the gift of sociological theory she gave me far into graduate school, and I am forever grate-
ful for the kindness and dedication she showed me in those early but critical stages of my academic career.

Her current and former students at Notre Dame also wrote a series of reflections that cover the projects she worked on, and her impact as a mentor and a colleague. This section ends with a faculty perspective on Mary Ellen from Kraig Bey erlein.

The Sociological Study of U.S. Catholicism: Parishes, Polarization, and Additional Activities

Linda Kawantel
Sr. Research Associate at the University of Notre Dame Notre Dame Sociology Graduate Student from 2009-2017

Mary Ellen Konieczny will be remembered as someone who was passionate about sociological research on the U.S. Catholic Church and who encouraged her students to think critically about how the study of Catholic organizations and individuals can contribute to the sociology of religion more broadly. She also modeled how a person of faith could use their sociological knowledge and skillset to make positive contributions to their religious tradition.

Applying her interest in understanding religion and conflict to the U.S. Catholic Church, in her first book, The Spirit’s Tether: Family, Work, and Religion among American Catholics, Mary Ellen investigated why cultural conflicts around the family, especially over abortion, homosexuality, and women’s roles, have resonated so deeply with American Catholics. She also sought to understand the role of Catholic parishes in influencing moral polarization in both the broader Catholic Church and in the public sphere. Her work showed that local culture at the parish level can play an important role in fostering moral polarization.

Following the publication of The Spirit’s Tether, Mary Ellen remained interested in not only understanding moral polarization in the U.S. Church, but also doing something about fragmentation in the Church. She organized a 2015 conference at Notre Dame about how Catholics can heal from polarizing conflict, and was the lead editor of Polarization in the U.S. Catholic Church: Naming the Wounds, Beginning to Heal, a book that emerged from the Notre Dame conference. Through this book, as well as through her personal interactions, she sought to bring together Catholics of different backgrounds and perspectives.

Mary Ellen served as a consultant and interlocutor in The American Parish Project (TAPP) and assisted as a sociological consultant and commentator on Catholic issues for various organizations and institutes. She was especially proud to deliver the 2015 Rita Cassella Jones Lecture on Women and Catholicism at Fordham University. In the future, she planned to research Catholic millennials.

Marriage and Divorce, Conflict and Faith

Karen Hooge Michalka
Assistant Prof. of Sociology at the University of Mary Notre Dame Sociology Graduate Student from 2010-2017

One of Mary Ellen’s many fruitful projects was the Marriage and Divorce, Conflict and Faith Study (MDCFS). Looking at local marriage cultures, her work uncovered the diversity of how commitment, individualism, and conflict were integrated into the narratives and lives of faith communities. Relying on interviews and participant observation at several congregations, she and her colleagues plumbed the cultural shaping of our intimate lives. This project produced several articles on diverse topics, provided both theoretical and practical insights, and was an example of Mary Ellen’s style of mentoring her students through scholarly collaboration.

In her article “Individualized Marriage and Family Disruption Ministries in Congregations: How Culture Matters” (SOR 2016, 77:2 144-170), Mary Ellen articulated how specific cultural (rather than organizational) characteristics provide the impetus for congregational outreach to families of divorce; these included confidence in pastors, lay empowerment, and discourses that transform individualized marriage in religious ways. She saw this work as having importance both in a scholarly and a lay setting and it is an example of how her theoretically rich insights always had practical applications. In the article “Individualism and Marriage: Ideal types for Making Sense of the Relationship between Self and Sacrifice” (Qual. Soc. 2017 40:287-310), she and her co-authors constructed
a theoretical framework for understanding the intertwining of individualism and commitment in marriages. Rather than being poles in a dichotomous binary, individualism and commitment can also reinforce and mutually constitute each other. Mary Ellen had the insight and determination to show the utility of this theoretical framework by applying it to six of the congregations from the MDCFS. Using it, we can clearly see how small groups create distinct and relatively consistent ways of understanding what it means to be married partners in an individualistic world.

Finally, in “The Continuance of Gender Culture amid Change in Mexican-American Immigrant Catholic Contexts” (JCR, Forthcoming), Mary Ellen and her coauthor heightened their focus on individualism, conflict, and commitment by looking within one particular congregation, an immigrant Catholic parish. Here, priests and parishioners found themselves working to incorporate culturally distinct understandings of gender norms – blending traditional Mexican gender roles with the therapeutic egalitarianism they encountered in the United States.

And she included her graduate students fully into the process of research—not only in assisting with the mundane, everyday tasks that needed to be completed, but also inviting and equipping us to conduct sensitive interviews, be conversation partners for the argument of the book, and train our own instincts for the most interesting and important insights.

Mary Ellen was also committed to having fun, and so these trips always included hiking in the Rockies, trips to downtown and Old Town Colorado Springs, and even a “quick trip” down to New Mexico—both for data collection and time at a used cowboy boot store where we were each mandated to find something. Mary Ellen lived life fully, and these trips to the Academy brought full life to those of us who participated in it. We will deeply miss her sense of adventure, her intellectual curiosity, her diligent work, and the laughter that permeated so much of this experience.

**USAFA Project**

**Meredith Whitnah**  
*Assistant Professor of Sociology at Westmont College  
Notre Dame Sociology Graduate Student from 2008-2015*

**Service Before Self: Cultural Conflict, Organization, and Religion at the US Air Force Academy** emerged from some of the same intellectual interests that animated Mary Ellen’s first book project. This project is an historical and qualitative study of how polarizing cultural conflicts about religion in American life are played out. Mary Ellen contended that understanding cultural conflicts involving religion must not only consider the effects of culture, but also, how organizational contexts and processes of power within them have contributed to their production. The analysis highlighted the roles of interest-oriented practices of power and resistance, as well as well-connected actors who use their power to bridge opposing groups.

Through multiple trips to USAFA that involved extensive time in the archives, meetings with key institutional actors, and lengthy in-person interviews, Mary Ellen’s energy for this project was insatiable.

**Carli Steelman**  
*PhD Student, Notre Dame Sociology*

I also had the unique pleasure of working with Mary Ellen on her United State Air Force Academy project. When I came to the project as her research assistant she was focused on questions about how and why the Airforce—a conservative institution—participated in the liberalizing policy of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” repeal. In an effort to answer this question she and I spent countless hours exploring narrative shift around repeal, and think about how stakeholders approached implementation. In that time she has taught me how to be a thoughtful scholar and she expanded my analytical capacity. But she has also improved me as a person. I was assigned to Mary Ellen at the last minute after a course than I had been TA’ing was terminated. Though she never intended to work with me, she was generous with her time, her empathy, and her experience. I have been truly blessed by the privilege of knowing her.

**Rwanda**

**Alison Fitchett Climenhaga**  
*PhD Candidate in Sociology at Notre Dame*

While religion in the U.S. was Mary Ellen’s primary area of expertise, over the past few years Mary Ellen actively expanded her scholarly horizons to include the great lakes region of eastern Africa, gamely delv-
ing into new literatures, cultivating new language competencies, and learning to navigate new social terrains for fieldwork. Pursuing a long-standing goal of researching religion outside North America, Mary Ellen developed a project in Rwanda centered on devotion to Our Lady of Kibeho, a Marian image that emerged following a series of apparitions in Rwanda during the 1980s. The project investigated the local-level beliefs, practices, experiences, and social identities of those who practice devotion to Our Lady of Kibeho, together with her roles in Rwandan family life and generational tensions; Rwandan political life, especially the salience of her embodied form as a black Madonna for Rwandan social identities and institutions; and social conflict and peacebuilding initiatives in post-genocide Rwanda.

Building on Mary Ellen’s expertise in gender and religion, the project grew to include historical work on the congregation of Rwandan Catholic sisters in whose school the Kibeho apparitions occurred. The project also situated Kibeho in the context of broader post-genocide reconciliation initiatives. In a recent paper, Mary Ellen and her coauthors analyze the material culture and ritual at a Catholic shrine dedicated to facilitating reconciliation, exploring how stations interpreting key gospel events through the event of the genocide create an environment where both perpetrators and victims can experience post-genocide reconciliation.

Mary Ellen’s work in Rwanda was thoroughly integrative and collaborative. Her keen theological knowledge—honored through earning a Master of Divinity degree in 1985 and working for the Archdiocese of Chicago for a decade—helped her to understand human behavior more deeply, rendering her sociological analysis of Catholic communities more critically sophisticated. From the outset Mary Ellen approached the Kibeho project as an occasion to collaborate with and train graduate students. Annual trips to Rwanda to conduct interviews, participant observation, and archival research provided opportunities for Mary Ellen to model field research methods—skills that were sharpened when she invited me to take the lead on conducting key interviews and interpreting Rwandan religious practices. She consistently invited me to use my own expertise in eastern African religion and history to shape the intellectual development of the project. Mary Ellen made mentoring central to her research process, formative for her students and generative for the development her projects.

Teaching and Mentorship

Meredith Whitnah

Mary Ellen approached teaching as an intellectual exercise, as a way of shaping and forming our lives, not as an arduous task or as though instilling information into people’s brains. She understood that teaching could form the instructor as much as it formed the students, and embraced this mission wholeheartedly. She was always ready to challenge her students to do more than they thought they could, to ask good questions that would invite them to ponder things for themselves, and to take ownership of their learning.

Mary Ellen also modeled the life of the researcher. She had an insatiable energy for exploring, uncovering, linking chains of an argument together, refining, and pursuing what was important. She expected no less from her graduate students, even when it meant, in my case, insisting that I do the more difficult dissertation project—because it would be worth it. And, of course, she was right. She believed in me when I didn’t know how to believe in myself, and through what felt like sheer force of will sometimes, she inspired me to keep going.

Audra Nakas Dugandzic
PhD Student, Notre Dame Sociology

I’m a first year PhD student at Notre Dame, and Mary Ellen was my adviser. It feels presumptuous to grieve her loss so deeply when I only knew her a few months and others knew her for years, but I think that speaks to the kind of person she was. I knew from my first meetings with her that she would become a lifelong mentor. It wasn’t just that our research interests aligned closely; from the beginning she advocated for me and took interest in me as a person. I’m hardly the only person in the department who has a story about stopping by her office to chat and staying an hour, at which point she would realize, in a panic, how much time had passed. In fact, I used to schedule meetings with her earlier in the day, because I knew if I scheduled one at 4:30 pm, there was no way I was going home at 5 o’clock! I admired her openness and warmth, and the way she seamlessly
wove together her faith and her scholarly endeavors. She pushed me intellectually while conveying a sense of confidence in me and excitement about my work. We had just started working on a project together on Catholic millennials, and I knew then that she was exactly the kind of academic I hope to become: a stellar researcher and a caring mentor.

I’m grateful for the time I was privileged to know Mary Ellen, short as it was. There is no replacing her. But I hope I can honor her with my research and by treating everyone I encounter—friend, colleague, student, research participant—with the same care, respect, and curiosity that Mary Ellen did.

Abigail Jorgensen
PhD Student, Notre Dame Sociology

Mary Ellen was the first sociologist I met (well before I applied to graduate school), and she had great impact on my life beyond simply introducing me to the discipline. From our first meeting, I was struck by how she modeled what it was to be a fierce researcher, an inspiring teacher, and a caring person. Later, as my advisor, she pushed me to always take on the more challenging work and to better myself, not just as an academic but as a full human. From our heated discussions on Durkheim to our heated discussions of fantasy football, and from guiding me as I wrote my master’s thesis to guiding me as I made my first quiche, Mary Ellen has made an indelible mark on my life. As was said at her funeral, she was “a spark through stubble;” I hope each of us carries on that flame of care for the human person that lit up every paper she wrote and interaction she had.

Megan Rogers
Research Fellow at the University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame Sociology Graduate Student from 2010-2017

For her students, Mary Ellen opened the lid to the black box that is academia. From initial idea to IRB and grant applications to working in the field to, finally, building and refining arguments, she involved us in the process and modelled what it meant to do quality academic research—and how to do it with joy. Her standards were high, both for her own research and for that of others, so when she approved of our work, we could be confident that we were on the right track. But she also made it very clear that academia was not her whole life, and neither should it be ours. The same energy that animated her teaching and research could be found in her private life, regardless of whether it was with her family, the Church, or in the pool or on a hiking trail. In short, she took the opaque and sometimes overwhelming graduate school experience and made it legible for us, encouraging us all along the way.

Brianna McCaslin
PhD Student at Notre Dame

Many of the reflections on Mary Ellen’s life have called her a bridge builder, noting her unique ability to make connections and live her life in an authentic, integrated way. This extended to her professional and academic life as well. She could seamlessly weave together theology, sociology, and feminism. She did not just care about intellectual advancement but what that would mean for real people in their daily lives. She didn’t just teach students, but engaged in learning with them and challenged them to be the best versions of themselves. For the students she mentored, she didn’t just care about our minds but about our hearts and souls as well. I experienced this firsthand as her graduate assistant. I worked with her on USA-FA and Rwanda where I learned what makes a good question, how to manage a research team, how to craft an argument, how to absorb and integrate feedback. I learned about the inner workings academia from working with her in her service to the religion section of ASA and the religion research workshop at Notre Dame, and through grant writing and publication revisions. Mary Ellen’s authentic, integrated mentorship influenced me as a scholar and as a person in ways that I am certain will always remain with me.

Faculty Reflection
Kraig Beyerlein
Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Notre Dame

I first met Mary Ellen Konieczny in 1997. At the time, we were both working as research assistants for the first wave of Mark Chaves’ National Congregations Study at NORC. She was a seasoned grad-
ate student, while I was an eager undergraduate. She took me under her wing, showing me the ropes and introducing me to Tom Smith, Andrew Greeley, among others. Her vast knowledge of the sociology of religion literature was daunting and her personal experience working with religious communities brought that literature to life. Moreover, she invited me over to dinner to get to know her husband, Chris, and sons, John and Peter. I remember those dinners fondly and how I felt like I was one of the family.

We were reunited at Notre Dame in 2009 (Mary Ellen arrived the year before). As faulty members and fellows at the Center of the Study of Religion and Society, Mary Ellen and I interacted regularly. We had many spirited methodological and theoretical debates (UofC vs. UNC). I have no doubt Mary Ellen believed that she won each time (she didn’t!). Everyone thrived off her energy and commitment to being the best scholar possible. Mary Ellen encouraged us to reject simple explanations and not to reduce religion to mundane dynamics. For all these reasons, it is not surprising that students flocked to her. She spent countless hours advising graduate and undergraduate students. Mary Ellen was a model advisor and was most proud of her students’ achievements. They were like family to her.

Mary Ellen was never short for words. She was always so excited to talk about her research and the connections she had made while conducting it. For example, I ran into Mary Ellen in the airport in Seattle after the 2016 ASA meeting. It turned out that we were on the same Southwest flight to Chicago. I had early bird check-in and she asked me to save her a seat. So, I did. I cannot remember another flight going by so quickly, as Mary Ellen talked passionately the entire time about all the research ideas/questions the meeting had generated and the new people she had met. I think I said two words. But that was Mary Ellen being Mary Ellen—her enthusiasm for scholarly pursuits and life were second to none.

Mary Ellen was an integral part of the sociology of religion program in particular and our department in general. Her passion, energy, knowledge, drive, and generosity will be forever missed. Mary Ellen’s spirit, however, will live on. How could it not, as she touched the lives of so many, both near and far.
New Books by Section Members


Written by leading theorists and empirical researchers, this book presents new ways of addressing the old question: Why did religion first emerge and then continue to evolve in all human societies? The authors of the book—each with a different background across the social sciences and humanities—assimilate conceptual leads and empirical findings from anthropology, evolutionary biology, evolutionary sociology, neurology, primate behavioral studies, explanations of human interaction and group dynamics, and a wide range of religious scholarship to construct a deeper and more powerful explanation of the origins and subsequent evolutionary development of religions than can currently be found in what is now vast literature. While explaining religion has been a central question in many disciplines for a long time, this book draws upon a much wider array of literature to develop a robust and cross-disciplinary analysis of religion. The book remains true to its subtitle by emphasizing an array of both biological and sociocultural forms of selection dynamics that are fundamental to explaining religion as a universal institution in human societies. In addition to Darwinian selection, which can explain the biology and neurology of religion, the book outlines a set of four additional types of sociocultural natural selection that can fill out the explanation of why religion first emerged as an institutional system in human societies, and why it has continued to evolve over the last 300,000 years of societal evolution. These sociocultural forms of natural selection are labeled by the names of the early sociologists who first emphasized them, and they can be seen as a necessary supplement to the type of natural selection theorized by Charles Darwin. Explanations of religion that remain in the shadow cast by Darwin’s great insights will, it is argued, remain narrow and incomplete when explaining a robust sociocultural phenomenon like religion.


Religious conversion is often associated with ideals of religious sincerity. But in a society in which religious belonging is entangled with ethnonational citizenship and confers political privilege, a convert might well have multilayered motives. Over the last two decades, mass non-Jewish immigration to Israel, especially from the former Soviet Union, has sparked heated debates over the Jewish state’s conversion policy and intensified suspicion of converts’ sincerity. When the State Winks carefully traces the performance of state-endorsed Orthodox conversion to highlight the collaborative labor that goes into the making of the Israeli state and its Jewish citizens. In a rich ethnographic narrative based on fieldwork in conversion schools, rabbinic courts, and ritual bathhouses, Michal Kravel-Tovi follows conversion candidates—mostly secular young women from a former Soviet background—and state conversion agents, mostly religious Zionists caught between the contradictory demands of their nationalist and religious commitments. She complicates the popular perception that conversion is a “wink-wink” relationship in which both sides agree to treat the converts’ pretenses of observance as real. Instead, she demonstrates how their interdependent performances blur any clear boundary between sincere and empty conversions. Alongside detailed ethnography, When the State Winks develops new ways to think about the complex connection between religious conversion and the nation-state. Kravel-Tovi emphasizes how state power and morality is managed through “winking”—the subtle exchanges and performances that animate everyday
institutional encounters between state and citizen. In a country marked by tension between official religiosity and a predominantly secular Jewish population, winking permits the state to save its Jewish face.


Although the LGBT movement has made rapid gains in the United States, LGBT people continue to face discrimination in faith communities. In this book, sociologist Jonathan S. Coley documents why and how student activists mobilize for greater inclusion at Christian colleges and universities. Drawing on interviews with student activists at a range of Christian institutions of higher learning, Coley shows that students, initially drawn to activism because of their own political, religious, or LGBT identities, are forming direct action groups that transform university policies, educational groups that open up campus dialogue, and solidarity groups that facilitate their members’ personal growth. He also shows how these LGBT activists apply their skills and values after graduation because of their own political, religious, or LGBT identities, are forming direct action groups that transform university policies, educational groups that open up campus dialogue, and solidarity groups that facilitate their members’ personal growth. He also shows how these LGBT activists apply their skills and values after graduation in subsequent political campaigns, careers, and family lives, potentially serving as change agents in their faith communities for years to come. Coley’s findings shed light on a new frontier of LGBT activism and challenge prevailing wisdom about the characteristics of activists, the purpose of activist groups, and ultimately the nature of activism itself. For more information about this project’s research methodology and theoretical grounding, please visit [http://jonathancoley.com/book](http://jonathancoley.com/book).


This book investigates how Jews became a pivotal reference point for defining modernity and national identity in French, German, and American social thought from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The social thinkers examined in its chapters worked within different national sociological traditions, emphasized different features of modern society, and disagreed about whether Jews were synonymous with or antithetical to those features, but they all invoked real or purported differences between Jews and gentiles to elucidate key dualisms of modern social thought. The Jews thus became an intermediary through which these social thinkers discerned in a roundabout fashion the nature, problems, and trajectory of their own wider (French or German or American) societies. The book’s concluding chapter uses sociological analyses of totemism to develop a novel explanation for why Jews became such an important cultural reference point yet signified such varied and inconsistent meanings; it suggests a rethinking of previous scholarship on Orientalism, Occidentalism, and European perceptions of America; and, through a comparison with contemporary discourse about Muslims, it addresses the implications of my study for how modernity and European and American identities are defined today. The book was selected as a finalist for the 2017 National Jewish Book Awards in the category of Modern Jewish Thought and Experience.


Islamophobia has long been a part of the problem of racism in the United States, and it has only gotten worse in the wake of shocking terror attacks, the ongoing refugee crisis, and calls from public figures like Donald Trump for drastic action. As a result, the number of hate crimes committed against Middle Eastern Americans of all origins and religions have increased, and civil rights advocates struggle to confront this striking reality.

In Islamophobia and Racism in America, Erik Love draws on in-depth interviews with Middle Eastern American advocates. He shows that, rather than using a well-worn civil rights strategy to advance reforms to protect a community affected by racism, many advocates are choosing to bolster universal civil liberties in the United States more generally, believing that these universal protections are reliable and strong enough to deal with social prejudice. In reality, Love reveals, civil rights protections are surprisingly weak, and do not offer enough avenues for justice, change, and community reassurance in the wake of hate crimes, discrimination, and social exclusion.

A unique and timely study, Islamophobia and Racism in America wrestles with the disturbing implications of these findings for the persistence of racism—in-
cluding Islamophobia—in the twenty-first century. As America becomes a “majority-minority” nation, this strategic shift in American civil rights advocacy signifies challenges in the decades ahead, making Love’s findings essential for anyone interested in the future of universal civil rights in the United States.


The Birth of the Gods is dedicated to Durkheim’s effort to understand the basis of social integration. Unlike most social scientists, then and now, Durkheim concluded that humans are naturally more individualistic than collectivistic, that the primal social unit for humans is the macro-level unit (‘the horde’), rather than the family, and that social cohesion is easily disrupted by human self-interest. Hence, for Durkheim, one of the “gravest” problems facing sociology is how to mold these human proclivities to serve the collective good. The analysis of elementary religions, Durkheim believed, would allow social scientists to see the fundamental basis of solidarity in human societies, built around collective representations, totems marking sacred forces, and emotion-arousing rituals directed at these totems.

The first half of the book traces the key influences and events that led Durkheim to embrace such novel generalizations. The second part makes a significant contribution to sociological theory with an analysis that essentially “tests” Durkheim’s core assumptions using cladistic analysis, social network tools and theory, and data on humans closest living relatives—the great apes. Maryanski marshals hard data from primatology, paleontology, archaeology, genetics, and neuroscience that enlightens and, surprisingly, confirms many of Durkheim’s speculations. These data show that integration among both humans and great apes is not so much group or kin oriented, per se, but orientation to a community standing outside each individual that includes a sense of self, but also encompassing a cognitive awareness of a “sense of community” or a connectedness that transcends sensory reality and concrete social relations. This “community complex,” as Maryanski terms it, is what Durkheim was beginning to see, although he did not have the data to buttress his arguments as Maryanski is able to do.


The contributors to Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion explore how ‘bringing the social back into the sociology of religion’ makes possible a more adequate sociological understanding of such topics as power, emotions, the self, or ethnic relations in religious life. In particular, they do so by engaging with social theories and addressing issues of epistemology and scientific reflexivity. The chapters of this book cover a range of different religious traditions and regions of the world such as Sufism in Pakistan; the Kabbalah Centre in Europe, Brazil and Israel; African Christian missions in Europe; and Evangelical Christianity in France and Oceania. They are based upon original empirical research, making use of a range of methods - quantitative, ethnographic and documentary.

Contributors are: Véronique Altglas, Peter Doak, Yannick Fer, Gwendoline Malogne-Fer, Christophe Monnot, Eric Morier-Genoud, Alix Philippon, Matthew Wood.


Latino Protestantism is growing rapidly in the United States. Researchers estimate that by 2030 half of all Latinos in America will be Protestant. This remarkable growth is not just about numbers. The rise of Latino Protestants will impact the changing nature of American politics, economics, and religion. Latino Protestants in America takes readers inside the numbers to highlight the many reasons Latino Protestants are growing as well as the diversity of this group.

The book brings together the best existing scholarship on this group with original research to offer a nuanced picture of Latino Protestants in America, from worship practices to political engagement. The narrative helps readers move beyond misconceptions about Latino religion and offers a window into the diverse ways that religion plays out in real life. Latino Protestants in America is an essential resource for anyone interested in the beliefs and practices of this group, as well as the
implications for its growth and areas for further study


The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence make up an unlikely order of nuns. Self-described as “twenty-first century queer nuns,” the Sisters began in 1979 when three bored gay men donned retired Roman Catholic nuns’ habits and went for a stroll through San Francisco’s gay Castro district. The stunned and delighted responses they received prompted these already-seasoned activists to consider whether the habits might have some use in social justice work, and within a year they had constituted the new order. Today, with more than 83 houses on four different continents, the Sisters offer health outreach, support, and, at times, protest on behalf of queer communities.

In *Queer Nuns*, Melissa M. Wilcox offers new insights into the role the Sisters play across queer culture and the religious landscape. The Sisters both spoof nuns and argue quite seriously that they are nuns, adopting an innovative approach the author refers to as serious parody. Like any performance, serious parody can either challenge or reinforce existing power dynamics, and it often accomplishes both simultaneously. The book demonstrates that, through the use of this strategy, the Sisters are able to offer an effective, flexible, and noteworthy approach to community-based activism.

Serious parody ultimately has broader applications beyond its use by the Sisters. Wilcox argues that serious parody offers potential uses and challenges in the efforts of activist groups to work within communities that are opposed and oppressed by culturally significant traditions and organizations – as is the case with queer communities and the Roman Catholic Church. This book opens the door to a new world of religion and social activism, one which could be adapted to a range of political movements, individual inclinations, and community settings.


The speed and the scale with which traditional religions in China have been revived and new spiritual movements have emerged in recent decades make it difficult for scholars to stay up-to-date on the religious transformations within Chinese society.

This unique atlas presents a bird’s-eye view of the religious landscape in China today. In more than 150 full-color maps and six different case studies, it maps the officially registered venues of China’s major religions – Buddhism, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic), Daoism, and Islam – at the national, provincial, and county levels. The atlas also outlines the contours of Confucianism, folk religion, and the Mao cult. Further, it describes the main organizations, beliefs, and rituals of China’s main religions, as well as the social and demographic characteristics of their respective believers. Putting multiple religions side by side in their contexts, this atlas deploys the latest qualitative, quantitative and spatial data acquired from censuses, surveys, and fieldwork to offer a definitive overview of religion in contemporary China.

An essential resource for all scholars and students of religion and society in China.
New Articles by Section Members


Ferguson, Todd W. “Female Leadership and Role Congruity within the Clergy: Communal Leaders Experience No Gender Differences Yet Agentic Women Continue to Suffer Backlash.” Sex Roles. 78(5): 409-422. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-017-0803-6.


Member News and Notes

Gowoon Jung will join the Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania as a postdoctoral scholar in the fall 2018.

Phillip Schwadel is taking a one-year leave from his faculty position at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. From August 2018 to August 2019 I will hold the position of “Senior Researcher, Religion” at Pew Research Center. Pew is bringing me in to help them with data collection and a report on adolescent religion.


Christopher Scheitle and Elaine Howard Ecklund had an op ed published in Religion News Service entitled “Evangelicals’ Surprising View of Science and What It May Mean.” Read it here.

Todd W. Ferguson is now Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas. Congratulations!


The Global Religion Research Initiative group, a network of multi-disciplinary group of researchers from Pakistan, India, and the US, continue to work on their research on women living Hinduism and Islam in countries where they are part of the majority or minority groups. The objectives of this group, which includes humanities and social science scholars, is to assess whether conceptualizing religion based on South Asian traditions allows us to move beyond the conceptualizations of religion developed on the basis of living Christianity. Equally important, the scholars are trying to work out meaningful methodologies that will work across disciplines and capture some of the data that is lost in translation. The first set of material will be available in summer 2019. Contact Bandana Purkayastha (purkayastha.bandana@gmail.com) for more information.

Call for Papers: Spirituality, Spiritual Needs, Diversity, Crisis, and Transformation

Special issue: Religions

Guest Editor: Mansoor Moaddel, Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland-College Park

Read the call here: http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/spiritualneeds

This special issue invites social scientists and humanities scholars to engage in creative interdisciplinary discussions on the function, diversity, crisis, and transformation of spirituality. Beyond such a general notion that spirituality is concerned with human search for security, happiness, empowerment, and the meaning and teleology of life, there have been very little systematic discussions, theoretical formulations, measurements, and hypotheses testing on exactly what constitutes spirituality. A distinction has also been made between sacred and secular spirituality, but the conceptual and empirical boundaries of the former with religious beliefs and practices, and of the latter with secular and scientific discourses have remained murky and unspecified. Intellectually innovative essays that challenge current conceptions of spirituality are welcome, but the primary concern is on empirical assessment of the subject, using a diversity of historical, qualitative, hermeneutic, and quantitative approaches. Selected contributions will demonstrate interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, primarily based on empirical research analyzing sundry aspects of spirituality, the crisis of spirituality, and
spiritual transformation. In particular, contributors are encouraged to shed light on the ways in which spiritual transformation and mobilization shape orientation toward religion, science, politics, and social relations. They should provide critical reflections on the ongoing tensions between the secular and the sacred, science and religion. The ultimate objective of this special issue is to provide a better grasp of the phenomenon of spirituality: how to distinguish it from other subjective-cum-intellectual experiences, operationalize the construct, broaden the understanding of the subject, and push the limit to the current knowledge of the ways in which humans attempt to make sense of their experience and the events they encounter, seek for sources of empowerment, and yearn for security, peace, and permanence in life.

The submission deadline for this special issue is 15 October 2018. You may send your manuscript now or up until the deadline. Submitted papers should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. We also encourage authors to send a short abstract (approximately 200 words) and a tentative title to the Editorial Office in advance (religions@mdpi.com).

Shanna Corner is now a post-doc at the Global Religion Research Initiative. She recently defended her dissertation, “Tactics and Transcendence: The Struggle to Create Common Understandings about Religion and its Relationship to Women’s Human Rights within the United Nations.” The abstract follows:

How do intergovernmental human rights regulatory institutions actually help to shape cultural understandings about the meaning of religion, including its relationship to women’s human rights and the types of actions governments must take to protect them? How, if at all, do United Nations (UN) and state elites matter in the effort to develop shared ways of understanding and talking about religion, women’s rights, and their relationship in these settings? Answering these questions requires examination and understanding of the cultural dynamics and processes that take place within these institutions themselves. Yet, sociological investigation within these spaces has been largely neglected or limited to analysis of civil society organizations and people affiliated with them. In this dissertation, I help to correct this problem and answer these questions by looking at dynamics that take place at the micro-interactive level within one of the most important intergovernmental institutions at work in the world to address and resolve differences around human rights, gender, and religion. This is the monitoring procedure of the UN’s main convention on women’s rights—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CE-DAW). I examine how UN treaty body members and state representatives involved in CEDAW monitoring procedures talk with one another about religion and its relationship to women’s rights within this setting, as well as how they think about this relationship and work out how to approach it. To do this, I analyze and triangulate interviews, ethnographic fieldnotes based on UN meetings, and documents produced as part of CEDAW monitoring procedures. My findings have implications for several areas of scholarship but are especially relevant for global society scholarship and secularism studies scholarship. They provide new knowledge about how intergovernmental institutions and people who work within them interactively shape how religion and its relationship to women’s rights are talked about, understood, and pushed forward. Using these findings, I illustrate and explain an underlying conflict that makes differences in this area difficult to resolve. Finally, I demonstrate inadequacies in central binaries that have undermined the accuracy of dominant social scientific scholarship in this area and show ways to overcome them.

Ryan Murphy was awarded a research travel grant from the University of Notre Dame’s Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. He will use this grant to travel to the University’s archives to continue his research on the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia, with the hopes of preparing a book manuscript for publication.
The ASA website has a handy scheduling tool. There will also be an app for scheduling all your conference activities. The information printed here is preliminary. These are subject to change. Check the ASA website for the most up to date schedule.

Saturday, August 11, 2018
8:30 to 10:10am
Religion, Gender, and Sexuality
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 4, Franklin Hall 10
Organizer: Rachel A. Rinaldo, University of Colorado Boulder

Presenters:

Orit Avishaim, “(How) Can you be Orthodox and Gay? Negotiating Same-Sex Desire and Jewish Orthodoxy.”


Kelsy Burke, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Amy D. McDowell, University of Mississippi. “White Women Who Lead: Mobilizing Race and Gender in a National Evangelical Women’s Ministry.”

10:30am to 12:10pm:
Religion, Politics, and Donald J. Trump
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 4, Franklin Hall 7
Organizer: Gerardo Marti, Davidson College

Presenters:
Evan Steward, University of Minnesota. “Public Religion and the Vote for Donald Trump.”

Sarah Diefendorf, University of Washington. “Understanding the Contemporary Religious Right Through Evangelical Responses to Feminism”

Samuel L. Perry, University of Oklahoma, Andrew Whitehead, Clemson University, Joshua Davis, University of Oklahoma. “God’s Country in Black and Blue: Christian Nationalism and Whites’ Views about Police (Mis)Treatment of Blacks”

Philip Schwadel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Christopher Garneau, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma. “Conservative Religion and Political Tolerance in the United States.”

2:30 to 4:10pm
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 4, Franklin Hall 7
Organizer: Jennifer L. Lê, Bellevue College

Presenters:

Jonathan Calvillo, Boston University. “Latino Protestants Constructing an Ethnic Past.”


4:30 to 5:30pm
Event 1580: Sociology of Religion Roundtables
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Salon C

Table 01. Evangelicals and Evangelicalism
Table 02. Intersectional Identities and Islam: Race, Gender, and Nationality
Table 03. Qualitative Studies of Church Culture
Table 04. Religion and Attitudes
Table 05. Religion, Health, and Well-being
Table 06. Theoretical Developments and Applications
Table 07. Religious Leaders and Shifting Religious Landscapes
Table 08. Using Religion: Practical Uses of Religious Resources

5:30 to 6:10pm
Section on Sociology of Religion Business Meeting
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Salon C

6:30 to 8:10pm
Section on Sociology of Religion Reception
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 5, Salon C

2018 Section Awards to be presented:
Student Paper Award: Di Di. PhD candidate in Sociology at Rice University, “Navigating Gender Norms: Gender Agency in Buddhist Temples in Mainland China and the US.”

Distinguished Article Award: Hoffman, Mark Anthony, Jean-Phillipe Cointet, Philipp Brandt, Newton Key, and Peter Bearman. “The (Protestant) Bible, the (printed) sermon, and the word (s): The semantic structure of the Conformist and Dissenting Bible, 1660-1780.” Poetics (2017).


Distinguished Book Award Honorable mention Tricia Bruce. Parish and Place: Making Room for Diversity in the American Catholic Church (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Sunday, August 12, 2018
7:00 to 8:15am
Section on Sociology of Religion Council Meeting
Pennsylvania Convention Center, Level 100, 103C

10:30am to 12:10pm
Regular Session on Religion
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Level 4, 408

Organizer: Korie Edwards, The Ohio State University

Presenters:
Rachel Ellis, University of Missouri-St. Louis. “Intersectionality and the Construction of the Normative Religious Self: The Case of Protestant Women in Prison.”

Elisabeth Becker. “Paradigms of Purification in European Mosques: How Islamic Ethics Informs Social Action”

Julia Peters, Stef Aupers, Erasmus University, Julian Schaap, Erasmus University. “Religious Nones and the Ironic Worldview in Coping with Life, Death and Suffering.”

Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting

Schedule at a Glance
Hotel Sofitel, Philadelphia, PA
Full program is available here.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2018
4:00–8:00 pm: 1rst ASR Executive Council Meeting and Dinner
4:00-6:00pm:
7:00–9:00 pm: Registration
8:00–10:00 pm: Welcoming Reception
8:30 pm: Award Presentations

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2018
7:00–8:15 am: Welcome Breakfast (attendance by breakfast ticket holders only)
7:45 am–5:00 pm: Registration (coffee and tea available)
8:00 am-6:00 pm ASR Book Exhibit
8:15-9:45 am: Sessions A1-A6
10:00-11:30 am: Sessions B1-B7
11:30 am-1:00 pm:
1:00- 2:30 pm: Sessions C1-C6
2:45-4:15 pm: Sessions D1-D6
4:30-6:00 pm: Sessions E1-E6
6:15–7:15 pm: The Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture – Jennifer Glass
7:15–9:00 pm: The Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture Reception
9:00-10:30 pm: Women of ASR Get-Together

MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2018
7:45-2:00 pm: Registration
8:00 am-4:30pm:
8:15-9:45 am: Sessions F1-F7
10:00-11:15 am: Sessions G1-G6
11:15 am-1:00 pm:
1:00- 2:30 pm: Sessions H1-H6
2:45-4:15 pm: Sessions I1-I6
4:00-4:30 pm:
4:30-6:00 pm: Sessions J1-J6
5:30-6:00pm:
6:15- 7:15 pm:
7:15-9:00 pm:

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2018
7:00–8:15 am: 2nd ASR Executive Council Meeting and Breakfast
Section on the Sociology of Religion
American Sociological Association

Section Officers:
Chair: Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University, 2018

Newsletter Editor (non-voting): David Eagle, Duke University, 2018

Section Secretary/Treasurer: Jen’nan G. Read, Duke University, 2019

Section Webmaster (non-voting): Peter Ryan, Notre Dame, 2018

Past Chair: Brian Steensland, IUPUI, 2018

Chair-Elect: Melissa J. Wilde, University of Pennsylvania, 2019

Section Council:
Richard Flory, University of Southern California, 2020
Philip S. Gorski, Yale University, 2018
Jennifer L. Lê, Bellevue College, 2019
Gerardo Marti, Davidson College, 2019
Rachel A. Rinaldo, University of Colorado, Boulder 2020
Jenny Trinitapoli, University of Chicago, 2018
Rebecca Barton (student representative), Brandeis University, 2018

Incoming Officers:
Chair-Elect: Lisa Pearce, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2019

Section Council: Ruth Braunstein, University of Connecticut, 2021
Samuel Perry, University of Oklahoma, 2021

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david.eagle@duke.edu (newsletter editor)