Letter from the Section Chair

I would like to highlight our 2016 Annual Meeting sessions, organized around a thrilling set of topics, and featuring papers from a wonderfully diverse set of panelists. Heartiest commendations to the session organizers (noted below) for assembling a remarkable set of sessions, each of which will put the sociology of religion in vibrant dialogue with other parts of the discipline. Planning is also afoot for jointly sponsored sessions with the Association for the Sociology of Religion.

Section election season is upon us. Soon the ASA will release candidate biographies. The leadership of our section is a matter of vital concern, and I strongly encourage you to vote in March. For their hard work securing candidates for the various positions, deepest thanks are due to the nomination committee: Elaine Howard Ecklund (Chair), Darren Sherkat, Michal Pagis, Sandra Barnes, and Jerry Park.

Omar M. McRoberts

Chair, Sociology of Religion Section

2016 Sociology of Religion Session Descriptions

“Religion and the Politics of National Identity” (Co-Sponsored by the Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Culture Sections)

Religion is increasingly recognized – including by scholars outside of the sociology of religion – as a defining feature of political life and as a constitutive element of individual and collective identities. The question is no longer whether religion matters, but how. This session explores this question through the lens of political contestation over national identity. Public appeals to expand or contract the boundaries of national identity are often made through reference to religion, either on its own, or through its intersections with race, ethnicity, language, sexuality, immigration status, and class, among other forms of difference. Recent work deepens our understanding of
how this works theoretically, and sheds light on how a wide variety of groups draw on religious ideals, symbols, practices, and identities in the course of expanding and policing the boundaries of national (and transnational) belonging.

Session Organizer: Ruth Braunstein, University of Connecticut

“Institutional Intersections: Religion Effects in other Institutional Realms”

Religious figures and religious organizations have always been an influential component of the structural and cultural changes that have shaped multiple eras. Through its interactions with other social institutions (law, education, health, work, etc.), religion has altered patterns of social interaction, re/shaped social structure and organization, and had various effects on social stratification. This session calls for papers that examine these institution-to-institution effects, with an emphasis on ways religion has had an impact on change and/or conflict in other institutions or vice versa. We are especially interested in ways sociological insights on religion may help those studying other institutional realms better resolve their research problems.

Session Organizer: Richard Pitt, Vanderbilt University

“Changing the Conversation on Science and Religion: Culture, Movements, and New Frontiers”

Science and religion are each issues of longstanding interest to sociologists, and their intersection has been receiving increased attention from contemporary scholars. Whereas science and religion have conventionally been viewed as oppositional, a growing body of research highlights possible compatibilities and intersections between these two ways of knowing. This session seeks to bring into dialogue recent advances in sociological understandings of science and religion (at the level of individuals, organizations, states, etc.) and their implications for culture, social movements, and other domains of social life.

Session Organizer: Shiri Noy, University of Wyoming

“Reclaiming Democracy? Political Movements, Religion & Social Change”

Struggles over contemporary injustices and the future direction of society often play out around particular issues framed as ‘political.’ But recent work on social movements, the sociology of culture, and democratic and post-democratic theory show that such struggles fundamentally occur not only on the terrain
of politics, but also on the terrains of civil society and mass political culture. On the latter terrains, religion in both its institutionalized and more free-floating forms is central in many societies. This session will explore the intersection of religion and movement politics at the levels of political society, civil society, and political culture through theoretically framed empirical studies.

Session Organizer: Richard L. Wood, University of New Mexico

Recently Published Articles


Diefendorf, Sarah. 2015. “After the Wedding Night: Sexual Abstinence and Masculinities Over the Life Course.” Gender & Society 29(5):647-669 (Data from interviews with men at an evangelical mega-church)


Nica, Andreea. 2016. “Review of Deconversion: Qualitative and Quantitative Results from Cross-Cultural Research in Germany and the USA.” Secularism and Nonreligion 5.


Recently Published Books


The passing on of ideals, norms and values from one generation to another in the same society assumes the character of a hereditary process which does not take place with the death of predecessors but comes about much earlier in the course of years and decades, very slowly, minute by minute, and step by step. This transition, moreover, has a typical connotation in that it is global, not fragmented and, at least tangentially, systemic in its organic unity and completeness. Parents pass on to their children what they in turn have been taught by those who are the grandparents of those children and the generators of contemporary educators and inculcators of culture. Rarely does a received inheritance remain identical in itself without undergoing decrements or increments. What’s more, it is not always left in its entirety with its every detail intact but tends, within a given cultural context, to reproduce the propensities of the past, the traditions of an earlier age and, basically, the essential values. Succession in an inheritance does not simply mean making inspiring principles and behavioural patterns work but it also implies the passing on of the means for exercising the role of inculcator of culture-educator-trainer. Therefore the passing on of the stick in a hypothetical relay race of life marks both the entrusting of a set of values and the attribution of a responsible role that concerns the future of succeeding generations.

• Cecilia Costa “Preface to the Special Section: Socialization and Religion”
• Stephen J. Hunt “Believing Vaguely: Religious Socialization and Christian Beliefs in Britain”
• Boris Mayer, Gisela Trommsdorff, Mihaela Friedmeier, Katarzyna Lubiewska, Daniela Barni, Kairi Kasearu, Isabelle Albert “The Roles of Religiosity and Affluence for Adolescents’ Family Orientation: Multilevel Analyses of 18 Cultures”
• Eugenia Roussou “From Socialization to Individualization: A New Challenge for Portuguese Religiosity”
Theoni Stathopoulou, Trine Stauning Willert
“Readdressing Diversity and Plurality at School. Religious Education in Greece”

Eleni Sotiriou “‘Monasticizing the Monastic’: Religious Clothes, Socialization and the Transformation of Body and Self among Greek Orthodox Nuns”


Michele Marchetto “Religious Education and John Henry Newman’s Idea of a University”

Stefano Martelli “Religions and Sports: Are They Resources For the Integration of Immigrants in the Host Society?”

Roberto Cipriani “Postface to the Special Section: Socialization and Religion”

**Call for Papers**

Special Issue of *Social Sciences* seeking manuscripts. Special Issue Topic: “Backlash: Contemporary Obstructions to Social Justice”

Deadline: April 15, 2016

This Special Issue seeks original scholarly contributions that focus on the varieties of contemporary backlash against or resistance to contemporary campaigns, pronouncements, and movements furthering social, political, economic, and/or environmental justice. In what specific forms (partisan political, corporate, religious, media, popular, social movement) does this backlash or opposition manifest? What are the goals, resources, methods, strategies, tactics, and limitations of this backlash? What are the prospects for altering “the arc of justice”?

Manuscripts that would be appropriate for this Special Issue could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Innovative methods of voter suppression or other obstacles to democratic participation
- Backlash against campaigns for racial justice in the criminal justice system (for example, mass incarceration, felon disenfranchisement, and “Black Lives Matter”)
- Neo-nativist/anti-immigration politics, campaigns, and/or organizations
- Corporate/state opposition or barriers to environmental justice and regulation, including attempts to violate treaties with sovereign indigenous nations
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

- “Religious liberty” (or other novel) arguments to undermine women’s and transgender health care coverage, marriage equality, and LGBT rights
- Oppression of religious and ethnic minorities (for example, new forms of Anti-Semitism or Islamophobia)
- Attempts to further incapacitate or undermine the power of the Labor Movement (for example, union-busting, weakening worker safety regulations, undercutting wages)
- New threats to entitlement and assistance programs or legal protections for people who are poor and/or elderly, and for people with disabilities

Empirical and applied studies, as well as theoretical contributions, from a wide range of disciplines (including law, sociology, criminology, political science, anthropology, education, public policy, philosophy, economics, history, psychology, social work), as well as cross- and interdisciplinary studies are encouraged. The central organizing theme linking the collected works will be a focus on contemporary forms of opposition or resistance to efforts to advance the civil or human rights of oppressed or marginalized peoples or against movements or campaigns for social and/or environmental justice.

Guest editors: Prof. Christine M. Robinson and Prof. Sue Spivey

For more information: [http://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci/special_issues/backlash](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/socsci/special_issues/backlash)

---

Sociology of Religion Group
American Academy of Religion
San Antonio, Texas
November 19-22, 2016

Deadline for Submissions: Tuesday, March 1, 2016

The Sociology of Religion Group (SOR) invites both panel and paper proposals across a wide range of topics of interest to both the sociology of religion and religious studies and are particularly interested in papers, which speak to both thereby
encouraging increased dialogue between them. In particular, this year’s CFP expresses interest in the following topics:

- Social and Religious Movements and/or Social Movements Theory and Religious Movements Theory
- Competing Canons within the Sociology of Religion and Religious Studies
- Theory and Methodology including issues of reproducibility, validity, and empiricism
- Religion and the Public Sphere
- Religion and Education including but not limited to “Religion and Education in Pluralistic Societies” or “Religion and Education in the Postsecular Age.”
- The multi-dimensions of “Revolutionary Love.” This includes but is not limited to love communism (or the communism of love), brotherly/sisterly love, or love as an impulse for social change. Conversely, it could include the inverse hypothesis - where love is not revolutionary at all but is egoistic or narcissistic (self-love), where revolutions are not based on love but on hate, where love is harmful and tears down dreams rather than build them up. Finally, papers could contain a synthesis addressing the contradictory impulses of revolutionary love – e.g. paradoxical reflections of the religious adage to love thy enemy.
- In a co-sponsored paper session, the Quaker Studies Group and Sociology of Religion Group invite proposals on normative religious identity and notions of the ‘true Church.’ We are interested in papers that utilize sociological theories and methods in the analysis of this topic. We are particularly interested in the following questions: What mechanisms do religious groups use to establish normative identities, particularly against deviants or schismatics within their own group? How is ‘membership’ and ‘authenticity’ counted and measured? What types of authority are used to sustain particular identities and how are these operationalized within the group? How are notions of ‘the world’ constructed and sustained, and how are these notions adapted when they no longer serve their original purpose (for example during the processes of denominationalization or internal secularization)?
The topics mentioned above are meant merely as suggestions. We encourage submissions of all papers that utilize sociological theories, methods, and questions in their analysis of religion. We are particularly interested in papers that address issues of inequalities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or those that utilize critical paradigms including but not limited to critical theory, Marxism, feminism, queer theory, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, and environmentalism.

Publication:
The Sociology of Religion Group of AAR regularly co-sponsors panels with the peer-reviewed print and online journal Critical Research on Religion (CRR) (http://crr.sagepub.com). Published by SAGE Publications, over 2600 libraries worldwide have subscriptions to the journal. Presenters of promising papers in SOR panels will be invited to turn their papers into articles and submit them for peer review to CRR.

News

GSS
As of December 18, 2015 the existing GSS website was replaced by a new site at http://gss.norc.org/.

Past users of the GSS website should find essentially the same information and content that existed on the old site. Among the major changes are the following:

NESSTAR is no longer part of the GSS website and many of its features have been replaced by GSS Data Explorer (see description below).

A bibliography of GSS and International Social Survey Program (ISSP) research publications has been expanded to cover over 25,000 entries.

Examples of recent GSS/ISSP uses in the media are provided.

The GSS Data Explorer https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/ is a component of the GSS website. Users can both analyze and save the GSS data online; share their work with others; and download entire datasets or limited extracts for analysis in many different statistical software program. Features of the GSS Data Explorer include:

- Integrated, nuanced search by year, subject, variable, and question text
• The ability to export full datasets or individual variables for analysis in almost any statistical software program
• The capacity to conduct online analysis and to save and share variables and analysis
• Social media tools enabling users to share findings with broader communities
• Tools for facilitating classroom teaching using the GSS
• GSS Trends reports for the media in 2012 and 2014
• An option to send queries to GSS staff
• More features under development

Podcast on Religion
Interfaith Radio is the nation’s only public radio program devoted exclusively to showing how religious belief and unbelief are shaping our world. The Board of Directors has grown with the growth of listeners, and includes Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and at least one agnostic. Interfaith Radio strives to:
• educate the public about the religious and ethical issues behind the headlines
• explore the mysteries of spiritual experience
• welcome guests and listeners from a diversity of traditions, including those with no religion
• promote dialogue, especially on contentious moral topics.

If interested, colleagues can download the podcast and/or visit our website: www.interfaithradio.org.

Awards

Recently Defended Dissertation
Todd W. Ferguson of Baylor University’s Department of Sociology recently defended his dissertation “Gender and Status in the Religious Congregation” on January 5, 2016.

Todd’s research uses Cecilia Ridgeway’s understanding of status hierarchies between women and men to see how religious congregations are sites of gender inequality. Using the US Congregational Life Survey, he explores three levels of organizational life that have the power to be impacted by gendered status differences: clergy, lay leadership, and ritual experiences. First, Todd studies how congregants evaluate female clergy, especially in light of the various leadership styles clergy employ. Second, he shows that congregational resources
have the power to impact the gender gap in volunteer lay leadership. Third, he connects Randall Collins’ theory of interaction ritual chains with Arlie Hochschild’s understanding of gendered feeling rules to demonstrate that men and women have different emotional expressions within religious worship services, which mirror status hierarchies.

Todd’s committee chairperson was Kevin D. Dougherty. More information can be found at www.toddwferguson.com.

Member News
Cynthia B. Bragg, an Assistant Professor at Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland will be presenting a paper at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Mid-Atlantic Conference March 10-11, 2016. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick, NJ. Submitted to the Religion, Gender, and Sexuality Section, Dr. Bragg’s paper is entitled “Profiles of Church of God in Christ Women ‘Doing Theology:’ Their Voices from Yesterday and Today.”