From the Chair

Welcome to a new year in the life of the ASA Sociology of Religion Section. One of the odd disjunctures in the rhythm of academic life (at least for those of us in the northern hemisphere) is that we find ourselves gearing up for new things when the rest of the world is slowing down, enjoying harvests, and preparing for winter dormancy. I hope that whatever your location in the academic world, you are enjoying new challenges, new students, and new insights into the questions that engage you.

In the Section’s life rhythm, fall is the time to reflect on our past annual meeting and begin preparing for the next. In August in San Francisco, we enjoyed a number of stimulating paper sessions, we shouldered (or elbowed) our way through a lively jam-packed reception, we gave several well-deserved awards, and we welcomed new Chair-Elect Jay Demerath and new Council members Lisa Pearce and D. Michael Lindsay.

Preparation for next year’s meeting in Atlanta is underway. A big thank-you goes to Elaine Howard Ecklund and Bill Mirola for joining me on the Program Committee. Linking to ASA’s theme for the meetings, we will have a session on “Religion and Citizenship.” In recognition of Atlanta as home to both the M. L. King and Carter Centers, we will also have a session on “Religion and Movements for Equality and Human Rights.” There will be a third open topic session as well as the usual roundtable and business sessions. All the paper sessions will be open submission, so start planning your contribution now.

I will soon be appointing three award committees for our Book Award, Paper Award, and Student Paper Award. If you would like to serve on any of these committees, or would like to nominate someone else to serve, please send me an email (fred.kniss@emu.edu).

As we think about our section’s new year, we can also join the rest of the world in celebrating the accomplishments of the past year and taking some time to bask. Here in Virginia, the fall colors are spectacular. I hope that wherever you may find yourself, you are enjoying both satisfaction and anticipation.

Fred Kniss, Eastern Mennonite University

Fred Kniss (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1992) is Provost at Eastern Mennonite University. Until July 1, 2009, he was Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago, where he also founded and directed the McNamara Center for the Social Study of Religion. He maintains a research affiliation at Loyola. His research has examined new immigrant religion, religious change and conflict, faith-based international relief and development organizations, and the so-called “culture wars.” He is co-author of Sacred Assemblies and Civic Engagement: How Religion Matters for America’s Newest Immigrants. He has also published a variety of articles and chapters on religious and cultural change, and is the author of Disquiet in the Land, a study of cultural conflict among U.S. Mennonites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has served on the boards of directors of the Association for the Sociology of Religion and the Religious Research Association, and has held editorial positions for the American Journal of Sociology, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, and Sociology of Religion.
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The Sociology of Religion Section of the American Sociological Association encourages and enhances research, teaching, and other professional concerns in

2009 Section Awards

Distinguished Book Award

Kelly Chong (University of Kansas), Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea (Harvard University Press, 2008).

Honorable Mentions:

Prema Kurien (Syracuse University), A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism (Rutgers University Press, 2007),


Distinguished Article Award


Student Paper Award


Dissertation in the Pipe

Grace Yukich (Sociology, New York University), is finishing work on her dissertation, “Praying With Our Feet: Religion and Immigration Politics in the New Sanctuary Movement.”
Member News

People

Kraig Beyerlein recently started his new position as assistant professor in the sociology department at the University of Notre Dame. He is also a faculty fellow in the Center for the Study of Religion and Society.

Richard Flory was appointed Associate Professor (research) of Sociology and Senior Research Associate in the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, both at the University of Southern California.

David O. Moberg (Marquette University), was awarded the Berton H. Kaplan Award for lifetime achievement in the field of spirituality, theology and health, by the Society for Spirituality, Theology and Health, at its annual meetings in June, in Durham, North Carolina.

Jenny Trinitapoli is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Penn State University.

Member Publications


Harriet Hartman (Rowan University) and Moshe Hartman (Ben Gurion University of the Negev), Gender and American Jews: Patterns in Work, Education and Family in Contemporary Life (Brandeis University Press, 2009).


Eugene Hynes (Kettering University), Knock: The Virgin’s Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland (Cork University Press, 2009).

David O. Moberg (Marquette University):


Margarita A. Mooney (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Faith Makes Us Live: Surviving and Thriving in the Haitian Diaspora (University of California Press, 2009).


The gazebo at Wellington Cove\(^1\) (above) immediately caught my attention as I shuffled through an interviewee’s pictures. I was struck by the way the sunlight illuminated the gazebo and gave the image a curious, almost otherworldly appearance. The perspective drew me down the boardwalk of a familiar place near where I live. In the summer I like to take my children there to play, to collect shells, and to study the sea creatures that make their homes among the gazebo’s pilings. For me the image evoked memories of family, adventure, and discovery. But this was not my picture. Even though I knew this place, I had never seen it quite this way before. It looked deserted, quiet, cold, and mysterious to me. I wondered why the subject photographed the gazebo for our study and looked forward to learning what the story behind it might reveal about lived religion.

As a co-investigator on the Spiritual Narratives in Everyday Life project (Nancy Ammerman, Principal Investigator), I became accustomed to the interval between my first reading of the pictures our subjects took and the stories they eventually told me about each image. Our study included a straightforward procedure: give each subject a 27-exposure, disposable camera with instructions to take photos of the places, possessions, and activities that are most important to them. We then used the developed pictures in an interview in which participants were invited to tell the story behind each photo. As conversations unfolded, interviewers probed for the presence (or absence) of religion and spirituality. Although some of our 95 subjects did not participate in this exercise, 80 people snapped over 1300 photographs. This method of photo elicitation interviewing (cf. Clark-Ibáñez 2004; Harper 2002) generated valuable insights into religion in everyday life.

The photo above, for example, was taken by Grace Shoemaker, a retired healthcare professional who lives near the Massachusetts coast. She describes herself as a spiritual, but “not religious” Episcopalian who practices Reiki and meets with a group of women to interpret dreams (monthly) more frequently than she attends church (once or twice a year). Grace told me the story behind her gazebo photograph.

I like to go there and sit when it’s quiet, and when I’m at the water, that’s when I pray and I talk to God and um, it’s a quiet place usually. In the summer, it’s not that quiet but other times of year it is, and I’ve been there when [there] were weddings,
and it’s just gorgeous to see the, you know, the families all together and the bride walking down. And I brought the kids there, my grandkids, and I often wonder who built it and why, and why that shape and I’m always curious what goes through people’s minds when they do that kind of thing.

Practices such as talking to God, experiences like observing weddings, memories of playing with children, and the gazebo’s proximity to water work together to make this a meaningful place for Grace. As our conversation progressed, however, I became aware that there was more to it than that.

After telling me about the gazebo, Grace pointed to the aura and remarked, “I like this, the way this picture came out with the light around it.” I prompted her to tell me more about the ring of light. “Oh, oh, [it’s] a bunch of guardian angels or God or I don’t [know], just that spirit that’s there. There’s a spirit that’s there,” Grace explained. “So it wasn’t just the camera?” I probed. “No, I don’t think so,” she continued. “No, I think there’s more to it than that. It’s so pretty. I mean and maybe it was just the camera, but I think things happen for a reason. I really do, I just, I mean so many times in my life something, you know, like that, where you can give it a good reason why, but there’s more to it than that. It makes it special.” Indeed, there is something special about this photo: the story and conversation it evoked helped to uncover how religion and spirituality inform Grace’s understanding of how the world works.

Through their photos, interviewees took us places we may not have gone, much less imagined. Inviting participants into the research process by letting them decide what to photograph stimulated collaboration and built rapport, thereby transforming the researcher-subject relationship in very productive ways (cf. Clark 1999; Clark-Ibáñez 2007). This exercise allowed us to “see” the social world, if you don’t mind a another play on words, through the lenses of participants. Overall, the benefits of this inexpensive procedure outweigh its logistical demands and any extra effort that may be needed to satisfy the concerns of an IRB. And, after using this method on two projects (Spiritual Narratives and my dissertation, “God’s Global Professionals”), I agree with Douglas Harper’s assessment: “photo elicitation mines deeper shafts into a deeper part of human consciousness than do words alone interviews” (2002:23).

WORKS CITED


Roman Williams is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at Boston University, and currently writing his dissertation titled, “God’s Global Professionals: International Students, Evangelical Christianity, and the Spirit of Globalization,” which explores identity and agency at the intersection of religion, culture, and globalization.
MEETINGS


FUNDING

The Science of Generosity at the University of Notre Dame is pleased to announce its second and final letter of inquiry (LOI) submission period beginning September 1, 2009 for those interested in seeking research funding to study generosity in the human and social sciences. Budgets can be no larger than $150,000 for a period of approximately 18 months. Letters of inquiry will be accepted for review and full proposal consideration through December 1, 2009.

Complete information can be found at: http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/

Deadline for Letters of Inquiry: December 1, 2009

The aim of this initiative is to stimulate scientific research on the practice of generosity in human life and society. We are particularly interested in better understanding three key aspects of generosity:

* the sources, origins, and causes of generosity
* the variety of manifestations and expressions of generosity
* the consequences of generosity for both the givers and receivers involved

The University of Notre Dame Request For Proposals (RFP) initiative in the study of the Science of Generosity is supported with funds from the John Templeton Foundation.
CALL FOR PAPERS
ASSOCIATION FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
2010 ANNUAL MEETING
ATLANTA
AUGUST 13-15, 2010

RELIGION, IDENTITY, AND PLACE

For many people, “place” has a particular religious meaning, and it must be modified or recreated as part of developing and expressing religious identity. In that sense, place is both a geographical and social location. We can see its dynamics in the processes accompanying immigration, but we can also see them as people try to pass their faith on to future generations or develop a new religious identity themselves. New places mean encounters with new and different religious others, with effects on identity that range from the syncretic to the defensive. The dynamics of place and religion have obvious implications for citizenship and national identity, as many religious groups have commitments that put them in tension with the nation-state. Similarly, different faith traditions have different relationships to and conceptions of the body in both the spiritual and material worlds. While theoretical calls to understand identities as embodied are important, they do not always reflect the ways people themselves experience their bodies--nor do they always capture the ways in which technologies, theologies, and socio-cultural developmental processes shape the private and public expression of religion. All considerations of the dynamics of and interactions among religion, identity, and place are welcome.

Papers and discussions are invited on a broad range of issues in the sociological study of religion relating to the meeting theme, including, but not limited to, the following:

❖ Religion and immigration
❖ Transnational identities and religious practices
❖ Religion and citizenship
❖ Religion, identity and the body
❖ Sacred spaces and places
❖ The rise of the Internet and “placeless” religion
❖ Nationalism as religion
❖ Race, religion, and community
❖ Voce, place, and religious experience
❖ Religion in personal, public, and collective identities
❖ Religious identity development

And, as always, we seek an inclusive mix of substantive, theoretical, and methodological approaches. Therefore, proposals for sessions and papers that fall outside the formal theme are also welcome.

DEADLINES:
❖ Session Proposals are due by January 31, 2010
❖ Paper Abstracts are due by February 28, 2010

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: (1) Submit your proposal by email as a Word attachment. Place the title of your proposal first, then names, affiliations, and email addresses of all authors, then your abstract/proposal all on one sheet of paper. (2) Limit paper abstracts to a maximum of 100 words. (3) Membership in ASR is required for program consideration (one author, for multi-authored papers). Go to www.sociologyofreligion.com for information/forms.

PROGRAM CHAIR: Gerardo Marti, Department of Sociology, Davidson College. Using the links provided on the ASR Website homepage, send all proposals to the following address:

asr2010@augustana.edu
Engaged Scholars Studying Congregations  
A Program of Mentoring, Networking, and Research Support  
Supported by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

For nearly thirty years, the Congregational Studies Project Team has led the way in inviting scholars to engage in serious, rigorous research on congregational life and encouraging religious leaders to draw on academic research to enrich their ability to provide effective leadership to local religious communities. During the next two years, the Team invites **younger scholars and religious leaders**, from any discipline, whose focus is on the **practices of local communities of faith**, to enter into a **program of research and networking**. Participants can enhance their ability to do excellent research that will also provide the wisdom with which gatherings of faithful people and their leaders can see more clearly and act more faithfully. In particular, participants will have the opportunity to:

- Hone research skills that allow them to take the life of faith communities seriously;
- Build a network of interlocutors and mentors who can read and evaluate their work;
- Build a cohort of colleagues who can encourage and stimulate each other in advancing understanding of how engaged scholarship works best; and
- Gain support for significant research and writing and the time to do it.

Since the summer of 2005, the first four cohorts of three “fellows” each were selected by and interacted with the Team. A “coach”—a senior scholar in the person’s field, either from the Team or beyond—worked with each fellow, especially in developing a network of conversation partners and sharpening the research. The project now entertains proposals for the fifth cohort of fellows who will gather with their coaches during two successive summer Team meetings and one fall conference, thereby allowing both a deep conversation about their work and an extension of their networks across overlapping cohorts of fellows, coaches, and clergy and religious leaders.

This round of fellowships will run from 1 June 2010 through 31 December 2011. Fellows will receive **research stipends of $9,000 for each of the two summers**, plus **consultation travel funding of $2,000 during the fellowship period** to enhance networking capacity, such as visiting the assigned coach or consulting with another fitting conversation partner. In addition, all expenses associated with the two summer Team meetings and fall conference will be covered.

**Who should apply?** Relatively new (generally pre-tenure) faculty members in theological schools, colleges, and universities are urged to apply. Likewise, leaders working in religious organizations are welcome to take advantage of this opportunity to enhance their work. In addition, more established scholars who are “re-tooling” to do significantly new kinds of work may also wish to apply.

**What sorts of questions do we hope might be addressed?** Any topic touching on the practices of congregational life is welcome. Such topics might include:

- What is the role of local faith communities in confronting a world (or a community) in distress? How can they see their task more clearly?
- How do congregations engage with and creatively reinterpret historic religious traditions? What impact does this have on members’ lives?
- How can we understand the basic ritual practices that bind a community together and direct their attention toward God?
- How do sermons shape (or fail to shape) the life of a congregation?
- How do congregations influence everyday decision-making?
- How do faith communities form their children in a faith tradition?

Please see *Engaged Scholars*, p. 9
What is expected of fellows? By the end of the fellowship period, each fellow will have completed an article-length publishable piece that is either itself aimed at religious leaders or for which there is a clear plan for a secondary adaptation. Each fellow will also work specifically with his or her coach to address both the academic and practical challenges of engaged scholarship and to enlarge the fellow’s network of interlocutors.

During the fellowship period, attendance by fellows is mandatory at two meetings and may be requested for a third. (a) At the summer meeting of the first fellowship year (set for 21-24 June 2010 on Cape Cod, Mass.), each participant will present a summary of her or his research plans. (b) At the summer meeting of the second fellowship year (date to be determined), fellows will present drafts of the written products of their research. They will also contribute a brief essay on the particular challenges of doing engaged scholarship of the type they have undertaken. These essays will focus a variety of conversations about how this kind of work can continue to be encouraged and supported. (c) During the fall of 2010, fellows may also be involved in a conference of scholars, clergy, religious leaders, and others. This conference (set for 15-17 November 2010 in Louisville, KY) seeks to expand the network of people concerned about engaged scholarship in congregations.

What is the application process? Complete applications for the 2010-2011 cohort of fellows are due no later than 1 February 2010. To be considered complete, applications must include the following four materials:

1. A brief essay (not more than five double-spaced pages) detailing the particular research and writing you wish to undertake and the way that research will grow out of and affect local communities of faith.
2. A budget outlining expected uses for the $18,000 research stipend. This may either be direct research expenses, summer salary replacement(s), and/or other materials or activities that will enhance the goals of your work.
3. A copy of your curriculum vitae.
4. The names and contact information for two persons you have asked to write letters of support. One of these should be from someone such as a dean or department chair who can express the endorsement of your institution for your participation in this program. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that these letters themselves are sent directly by your recommenders to the project assistant by the deadline.

Send materials to engagedscholars@hartsem.edu. With the exception of letters of support, electronic submission using e-mail attachment is the only accepted form of submission. Letters of support only should be mailed by recommenders directly to the project assistant:

Christy Lohr
385 York Street
Jersey City, NJ 07302
Attn: Engaged Scholars

Awards will be announced no later than 1 April 2010.

The Congregational Studies Team includes: Nancy Ammerman (Boston University), Larry Mamiya (Vassar College), Bill McKinney (Pacific School of Religion), Omar McRoberts (University of Chicago), James Nieman (Hartford Seminary), Robert Schreiter (Catholic Theological Union), Stephen Warner (University of Illinois, Chicago), and Jack Wertheimer (Jewish Theological Seminary).
A Message from the President of the Association for the Sociology of Religion

As is customary, the 2010 meetings of the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR) will meet in Atlanta on August 13-15 overlapping with the ASA meetings. The Sociology of Religion Section day in Atlanta is early in the meetings, meaning that those traveling to Atlanta will not have to stay the entire week to be able to participate in both section and ASR events. Further, ASA Section chair Fred Kniss and I will be collaborating on some aspects of the meetings, including at least one jointly-sponsored Thematic Session.

I want to use this message to urge you all to participate in the ASR meetings. The ASR Call for Papers appears elsewhere in this newsletter, providing basic information about the program theme, where to send abstracts and proposals, and relevant deadline dates. Program Chair Gerardo Marti and I are eager to hear your ideas, and work with you to ensure your participation in the ASR meetings. This year’s theme is "Religion, Identity, and Place" – the Presidential address, the annual Paul Hanley Fursey lecture, and other highlighted sessions, will revolve around concepts, individually and in interaction. But of course, the meetings are open to work in any area of the sociology of religion.

Those who have participated in the ASR in the past know some of its advantages. Compared to the ASA, the ASR operates on a very human and humane scale, allowing plenty of opportunity to meet other scholars and discuss your work and others’. It is a particularly good place for graduate students to present papers on their research, and meet some of the more established members of our subdiscipline.

Please send us your ideas for sessions, names of possible books for author-critics sessions, or paper abstracts.

We hope to see you there!

Rhys Williams, Loyola University Chicago

From the Editor

As I was finishing up this issue of the newsletter, I realized not only that I leave early in the morning for Denver and the annual SSSR meetings, but that just above my note here is a message from Rhys Williams about the ASR meetings next summer, as well as several other reminders of upcoming meetings where we can present, and hear, the latest research findings, as well as catch up with colleagues and friends we may not have seen since the last round of meetings. While I was thinking about the constant round of research, writing, presentation, and publication, I re-read Section Chair Fred Kniss’ note that leads off this issue. He comments not only on the busyness we all experience, but suggests we take some time to “bask.” I like that—as long as I don’t bask too much or too often.

I am happy to be able to publish the article by Roman Williams on photo elicitation methodology for qualitative interviews. We have utilized this methodology in several projects we’re working on at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, and the resulting interviews have been wonderful experiences and have netted very interesting stories and insights into the lives of those we’re studying. We have found this approach to be very much worth the effort.

For the photos on the masthead of this issue, I decided to continue the theme of photo elicitation--and basking--and mounted some representative photos of a summer trip of mine through parts of Baja California. If you’re really interested, I could tell you the stories behind the pictures, otherwise, bask and enjoy.

The next newsletter will be out in February, and I’ll be asking for your contributions in early January. As always, if you have an idea for a contribution, don’t wait for me to ask, drop me an email with your idea and we’ll see what we can work out.

RICHARD FLORY, University of Southern California