
Sociology of Religion Section

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American Sociological Association

From the Chair

Michele Dillon
University of New Hampshire

As I reflect on the past year I am impressed time and again by the extent to which religion is present in various guises in our public culture. The year ended with *Popular Mechanics*, a monthly magazine that to judge from its advertisements for Chevy trucks, power tools, and Viagra, is written primarily for men, featuring "The Real Face of Jesus" on its front cover. The pro-environmental anti-SUV, "What would Jesus drive" billboard campaign got underway, and this coincided with Chevrolet's sponsorship of a month-long, 16 city "Come together and worship tour" featuring singers and bands that are part of the ever-growing genre of contemporary Christian music. Earlier in the year, the familiar American phrase, "For country and faith" accompanied a 6.5 x 5.5 color photograph on the front page of the *New York Times* (9/30/02) showing Muslim women unfurling a large American flag in readiness for the 17th annual Muslim Day parade down Madison Avenue in Manhattan. These cultural snapshots provide useful reminders that just when we think we are getting a better understanding of the place of religion in contemporary society, we have to reassess what it is we really do know about religion's social significance. Some of our taken-for-granted assumptions whether about the feminization of religion, the differentiation of religion from other cultural and institutional processes, or the declining potency of a civil religion, are being challenged and continuously call out for more nuanced understandings.

But of all the news stories of the past year, perhaps the most surprising pertains to the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. The surprise, in my view, has less to do with the core story that sex abuse happened and was so systematically covered up by church officials. The greater surprise is that so many people have

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Exchange on Beliefs

Comment on Ziad Munson's "Making Sense of Beliefs in the Pro-Life Movement"

Dawne Moon
University of California, Berkeley

I was delighted to read Ziad Munson's article about the need for sociologists of religion to focus on religious beliefs. I could not agree more, and look forward to productive engagements on this topic in this forum. Munson suggests that psychology and political science have models for looking at beliefs, but I believe these models do not go far enough to understand the origins, meanings, and effects of people's beliefs. We do need to consider the contents of beliefs, as Munson argues, but we also need to go deeper than he seems to allow in his commentary. We need to consider that beliefs have material consequences in people's lives, for example in legitimating patterns of authority. I will return to this point, but I will first argue that we already have the tools we need to consider the origins and effects of beliefs, in the somewhat forgotten realm of phenomenology.

We in the Sociology of Religion have something of a baby/bathwater experience when it comes to phenomenology. Jettisoned when secularization theory became discredited, Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (Doubleday, 1967) engages precisely the question of how people produce things like beliefs, and the effects these beliefs have back on people. In the world today, it is hard not to notice the material and institutional effects of beliefs. In this context, sociologists of religion have an opportunity, and perhaps even a responsibility, to utilize and re-popularize a framework that attends to where beliefs come from and how they can change material and institutional realities.

In the examples Munson uses, it is clear that anti-abortion activists' beliefs can seem contradictory to a sociologist who believes democratic ideals to conflict with the desire to limit the rights of particular citizens. In Munson's view, we can resolve this tension by recognizing the difference between ends and means, though I am not sure that this is the most useful mode of analysis.

There are deeper questions we can ask about these beliefs. For instance, how do people's social and material worlds contribute to their beliefs? How do their specific beliefs about what *should be*,

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Section Officers 2002-03

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National Congregations Study

A public version of the National Congregations Study data set is now available through both the American Religion Data Archive, based at Pennsylvania State University (www.thearda.com) and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), based at the University of Michigan (www.icpsr.umich.edu). It is Study #3471 in ICPSR.

The National Congregations Study, directed by Mark Chaves at the University of Arizona, surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,236 religious congregations in the spring and summer of 1998. Data were collected on a wide range of variables, including congregations' social composition, worship practices, organizational characteristics, and many types of congregational activities. Several items from the 1990 U.S. census measuring characteristics of the census tract in which each congregation is located have been appended to the data set."

Call for Awards Nominations for 2003

Book Award, 2003

Books published during the previous two years are eligible for the 2003 award. Letters of nomination to Michael Hout, Chair of the Committee, and a copy of the nominated book sent to each Committee Member must be received no later than March 15, 2003.

Michael Hout, Chair, Survey Research Center, University of California, 2538 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94720-5100; email: mikehout@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Marie Cornwall, Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; email: marie_cornwall@byu.edu

Philip Gorski, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706; email: pgorski@ssc.wisc.edu

Article Award, 2003

Peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters published in the previous two years are eligible for the 2003 award. Letters of nomination to Richard Wood, Chair of the Committee, and a copy of the nominated article/book chapter to each of the Committee Members must be received no later than April 1, 2003.

Richard Wood, Chair, Department of Sociology, University of New Mexico, 1915 Roma NE, SSCI #1103, Albuquerque, NM 87131-1166; email: rlwood@unm.edu

Susan Eisenhandler, Department of Sociology, University of Connecticut, Storrs CT 06269-2068; email: eisenhan@uconn.edu

David Smilde, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-1611, email: dsmilde@arches.uga.edu

Student Paper Award, 2003

Either published or unpublished papers are eligible, but note that if the paper is published, it may not compete for both the student paper award and the article award. Papers of 20-40 manuscript pages (including notes, tables, and references) will be considered. Authors must be students at the time the nomination is submitted and the papers must have been presented or published in 2002 or 2003 to be eligible for the 2003 award. Letters of nomination to Marilyn Krogh, Chair of the Committee, and a copy of the nominated article to each Committee Member must be received no later than May 1, 2003

Marilyn Krogh, *Chair* Department of Sociology and Anthropology Loyola University, Chicago 6525 N. Sheridan Rd. Chicago IL 60626-5385. email: mkrogh@luc.edu

Sharon Erickson Nepstad, Department of Sociology, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282; email: nepstad@duq.edu

Daniel V. A. Olson, Department of Sociology and Anthropology Indiana University South Bend, South Bend, IN 46634; email: dolson@iusb.edu

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been outraged that the church behaved and continues to behave “just like a corporation.” For many years now sociologists have been documenting that religious institutions—at least in the US—are like economic institutions; churches compete with each other in order to maintain market share and this competition necessarily sees them engaging in the entrepreneurial practices that characterize non-religious firms. Anyone in US today can take up the Yellow Pages and between Chiropractors and Cigarette Dealers find listings and advertisements for a range of churches. The very fact that we can do this (and indeed that we may change our minds and choose a chiropractor or cigarettes over church) is testament to the entrepreneurial logic of the religious marketplace and, one can assume, to the public’s expectations that churches are like businesses and thus should be actively seeking to maintain their competitiveness. Following this corporate logic, if other organizations and firms tend to move troublesome workers around rather than deal with the negative economic consequences that invariably follow on the heels of bad publicity, should churches not do the same? If it is customary for defendants in law suits to have access to the plaintiffs’ psychotherapy and counseling records in order to make their own assessments of the plaintiff’s emotional damage, shouldn’t churches have this right also?

If we answer these questions with an affirmative yes, then I think we are convinced that churches really are like economic institutions competing to maintain their market niche. But my guess is that many sociologists of religion feel some of the same outrage at the Catholic Church’s strategic behavior as do the many ordinary individuals we hear from in opinion polls and on talk shows. In some circumstances it would seem, there is quite a broad consensus that religious institutions should act in a more “religious” manner, i.e., they should be more pastoral, more moral, more spiritual, less strategic and legalistic, and more constrained by sensitivity to the human costs exacted by their actions. The current desire to retrieve the sacred and inject it back into religious institutions (and the public sphere) does not discredit the expansive theoretical and empirical contributions generated by the religious economies model. I think, rather, it highlights a broader tension in both sociological theorizing and in everyday discourse resulting from the ambiguousness of the boundaries between religious and non-religious entities. We want the Catholic Church to be held to a higher ethical standard than say Enron or General Motors, but at the same time, we do not want the Church to claim that the sacredness of the religious sphere and the separation of church and state means that law suits against it should be dismissed. This same tension underlies the ongoing political debate over religious-based social services; as argued by President Bush, churches are just like other organizations and, therefore, should receive federal funds; yet, unlike other organizations churches can “instill hope” and are, therefore, better equipped to deliver social services.

These contradictory expectations of religion and the ambiguities concerning what religious institutions can and should do, provide a humbling challenge to sociologists of religion as we seek to craft research programs whose findings will advance our discipline while simultaneously illuminating the public’s understanding of religion. The tasks at hand become even more complex when we contemplate the increasing globalization of religion and its cultural and geopolitical implications. Complex questions invariably give rise to some controversial and contested answers. Let’s hope that the intellectual and political controversies, while energizing us, do not divert from our shared desire to understand and explain the multi-layered presence of religion in public culture.

Member Publications

John Schmalzbauer. *People of Faith: Religious Conviction in American Journalism and Higher Education*. Cornell University Press, 2003 .

People of Faith analyzes the role of Catholic and evangelical Protestant beliefs in the newsroom and the classroom. Schmalzbauer’s interviews with forty prominent journalists and academics reveal how some people of faith seek to preserve their religious identities in purportedly secular professions. What impact, he asks, does their Christianity have on their jobs? What is the place of personal religious conviction in professional life?

Richard L. Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Faith in Action focuses on the institutional, organizational, and cultural underpinnings of democratic life. Wood draws on his original research to analyze the social and cultural dynamics that enable and constrain efforts to deepen democracy in the contemporary United States. The book compares two models for non-partisan political organizing by Hispanic, African American, and white residents of poor, working class, and middle class urban neighborhoods one based on an appeal to ethnic identity, the other based on an appeal to religious commitment.

Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting ASA Section on the Sociology Of Religion August 16, 2002, Chicago

Compiled by Secretary Treasurer William Silverman

Called to order at 3:35 p.m. by Rhys Williams, chair. 25 people attended the meeting. The Secretary Treasurer presented a draft budget for 2003. The budget is attached below. Several pieces of information that are needed to prepare a final budget are not yet available from ASA. We have not yet received the final report on expenses for 2001 or information about detailed expenses through July 2002. Section members at the business meeting voted to accept the draft budget as proposed with the understanding that the budget will be revised after the missing financial reports are available.

Rhys Williams summarized for attendees the reports of Section committees and actions taken at the Section Council meeting this morning.

·Joseph Tamney has retired as editor of the Section newsletter. The newly appointed editor is David Smilde, University of Georgia.

The nomination Committee for 2002 was Nancy T. Ammerman, chair; Penny Edgell, Roger Finke, and Patricia Wittberg, members. Election results -- R. Stephen Warner is the chair elect for 2004. Christopher Ellison and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes were elected to the Council. Elaine Howard Ecklund is the student representative to the Council.

The program committee for the 2002 annual meeting was Rhys Williams, chair and members John H. Evans, Sally K. Gallagher, and Richard L. Wood. The program for the 2002 annual meeting contained two regular sessions that were open for submission of papers. The session topics were "religion and inequality" and "religion in comparative perspective." There also was a session with five roundtables and an "Author Meets Critics" session sponsored jointly with the Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities. They discussed *Divided by Faith* by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith.

Madeline Cousineau reported that she had an easy year as Section web master. Once the web site is set up the job only involves maintenance and updating of information. She wants to resign her position as Section web master. Michele Dillon will appoint a replacement.

Membership committee: Jerry Pankhurst, chair and David Sikkink, member. Jerry Pankhurst reported on recent trends in section membership and offered suggestions for future activities of the committee. Section membership was 476 as of August 1, 2002. Membership has been fairly stable, with a decline of 26 members since August 1, 2000. Most other ASA Sections also have experienced small membership declines. David Sikkink (Notre Dame) was appointed membership committee chair to succeed Jerry Pankhurst. In 2000 the Section bought a set of mailing labels for people who teach courses in the sociology of religion. On February 20, 2002 the ASA office sent out a mailing to 271 people selected from the list to be likely prospects for Section membership. Comparison of a June 2002 Section membership roster with a list of people who received the mailing showed that 9 people joined the section, possibly because they received the mailing. This is a 3% success rate. The cost of the labels to the Section was \$222.90. $222.90/9 = \$24.77$ per new member. This does not include the cost of processing the mailing that was paid by ASA. This membership mailing was not successful or cost effective in attracting new members.

The Council discussed the winners of the 2002 awards. Rodney Stark has agreed to continue reimbursing the Section for travel costs of winners of the student paper award.

A suggestion was made at the 2001 Council meeting that it might be a good idea to assign names to awards made by our section. A committee was organized to explore award naming. Rhys Williams, chair; Nancy T. Ammerman, Penny Edgell, and Michael O. Emerson, members. Some ASA Sections have named their awards. Examples of possible names are: Emile Durkheim Book Award, Barbara Hargrove article award, and Patrick McNamara Student Paper Award.

Nancy Ammerman noted that there are two strategies for selecting names for awards. Awards may be named for well-known sociologists or for sociologists who are well known within the sociology of religion field who may not be well known among general sociologists. The second strategy provides a story which becomes part of the lore of the Section. Most sections do not name their awards after living people.

Helen Berger favors leaving the award titles plain and simple. She noted that preparation of plaques with a longer award title would be more expensive because engravers charge by the character.

Penny Edgell suggested that using names that are well known among the general membership of the ASA would raise the profile of the Section.

A decision on the proposal to name awards will be made at the 2003 annual meeting after members have had a chance to comment. Comments may be sent to the Newsletter or posted on the listserv.

The minutes of the August 21, 2001 annual business meeting were approved as submitted by Adair Lummis, past Secretary-Treasurer.

Michele Dillon, Section chair elect discussed her plans for next year. The theme for the 2003 annual meeting will be, "The question of culture." She will set up a program committee. Session topics will be: Religious cultures and the propensity to violence, ritual and the preservation of the sacred in everyday life, and religion and life course transitions.

Michele Dillon thanked Rhys Williams for his work as Section chair. She also thanked Council members whose terms were ending and past committee chairs for their work for the Section.

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

FINAL BUDGET FOR 2003
Sociology of Religion Section, (#34)
American Sociological Association

This budget was approved by the Section Council and the Section Business Meeting at the ASA meeting in Chicago, August 2002. It was approved as a provisional budget that will probably be changed on lines 1, 2, 5, 8, and 13. For a discussion see the comment pages.

Item	Amount
Revenues	
1. Dues income	630
2. Allocation for section	1,954
3. Total revenues	2,584
Expenses	
4. Annual meeting - reception	750
5. Newsletter expenses	1,406
6. Awards	300
7. Printing brochures	25
8. MISC. - Section development	103
9. Total expenses	2,584
10. Revenues - expenses	0
Student paper award	
11. Contribution by R. Stark	Up to 500
12. Student paper competition expenses	Up to 500
13. Prior year balance (Carry over)	1,393

Nominees for 2003-04 Section Officers

The Section nominations committee (Rhys Williams, Marie Cornwall, Harriet Hartman and Darren Sherkat) has produced a slate of nominees for the spring election.

Section Chair:

Roger Finke, Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies, Penn State University, 2000 to present. *Other positions held in ASA*: Member of the Graduate Student Paper Competition, Committee for the American Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Section, 1998-2000. Chair, 1999. Member of the executive board of the American Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Section, 1995-97. *Publications*: "The Effects of Professional Training: The Social and Religious Capital Acquired in Seminaries." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41: 103-120, 2002, (with Kevin Dougherty). *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000, (with Rodney Stark). "Organizational Revival from Within: Explaining Revivalism and Reform in the Roman Catholic Church." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39:154-170, 2000, (with Patricia Wittberg). *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992 (with Rodney Stark). "Religious Deregulation: Origins and Consequences." *Journal of Church and State* 32: 609-626, 1990. *Awards/Honors*: Book Award from the American Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Section, 2001. Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Center Fellow, Purdue University, 1996. Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1993.

Janet Jacobs, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Colorado. *Other positions held in ASA*: Council member, Sociology of Religion section; Council member, Sex and Gender section. *Publications*: *Hidden Heritage: The Legacy of the Crypto-Jews* (University of California Press, 2002); *Religion, Society and Psychoanalysis* (Westview, 1997). *Victimized Daughters: Incest and the Development of the Female Self* (Routledge, 1994); *Divine Disenchantment: Deconverting From New Religious Movements* (Indiana University Press, 1989). *Awards*: Woman of the Year Award, Colorado Council of Academic Women (1999) Alumni Teaching Award, University of Colorado (1998) Faculty Teaching Award, University of Colorado (1992)

Council:

John Bartkowski, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Mississippi State University. *Other positions held in ASA*. Various committee appointments editorial board positions outside of ASA. *Publication*: Bartkowski, John P. 2003. *The Promise Keepers: Servants, Soldiers, and Godly Men*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press; Bartkowski, John P., and Helen A. Regis. 2003. *Charitable Choices: Religion, Race, and Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era*. New York: New York University Press; Bartkowski, John P., and Jen'nan Ghazal Read. 2003. "Veiled Submission: Gender Negotiation among Evangelical and U.S. Muslim Women." *Qualitative Sociology* 26(1): 71-92; Bartkowski, John P. 2001. *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families*. New

Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press; Bartkowski, John P., and W. Bradford Wilcox. 2000. "Conservative Protestant Child Discipline: The Case of Parental Yelling." *Social Forces* 79(1): 265-290. *Awards/Honors*: Grants from the Joint Center for Poverty Research, PricewaterhouseCooper Endowment, and Louisville Institute. Research has been covered by CNN, USA Today, AOL News, WNYC Radio, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

Jose Casanova, Professor, Department of Sociology (2001) and Chair, Committee on Historical Studies (2002) New School of Social Research. *Other positions held in ASA*: ASA Dissertation Awards Committee, 2002-5. *Publications*: "Beyond European and American Exceptionalism: Towards a Global Perspective," in G. Davie, P. Helas and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Predicting Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. "What is a Public Religion?" in Hugh Heclo and Wilfred McClay, eds. *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press). "Religion, the New Millennium, and Globalization," *Sociology of Religion* 62:4, Winter 2001. "Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam," *Social Research* 68:4, Winter 2001. *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) (Editions in Japanese, Italian and Spanish and forthcoming in Arabic and Indonesian). *Awards/Honors*: Past President, Association for Sociology of Religion, 1998-2001.

Michael Hout, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley. *Other positions held in ASA*, ASA Council At-Large Member, 1997-2001; Methodology Section Chair, 1997-1999; *Sociology of Education* Editorial Board, 2001-present. *Publications*: Hout, Michael, and Claude S. Fischer, 2002. "Explaining the Rise of Americans with No Religious Preference: Generations and Politics." *American Sociological Review* 67: 165-190. Hout, Michael, Andrew M. Greeley, and Melissa J. Wilde, 2001. "The Demographic Imperative in Religious Change." *American Journal of Sociology* 107: 468-500. Greeley, Andrew M., and Michael Hout. 1999. "Americans' Increasing Belief in Life After Death: Competition and Assimilation." *American Sociological Review* 65 (December): 813-836. Goodman, Leo A., and Michael Hout. 1998. "Statistical Methods and Graphical Displays for Comparing How Two-Way Associations Vary Among Countries, Among Groups, or Over Time." *Sociological Methodology* 28: 175-239 (with discussion by Yu Xie, pp. 231-236, Kazuo Yamaguchi, pp. 237-248, and Goodman-Hout, pp. 249-262). Fischer, Claude S., Michael Hout, Martin Sanchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss, 1996. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton U. Press. *Awards/Honor*: Distinguished Graduate School Alumnus, Indiana University (2000) Elected to American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1997) Population Association of America's Clogg Memorial Award "In recognition of distinguished contributions to the collection, modelling, and analysis of census and survey data." (1996) Guggenheim Fellowship (1986-1987).

Sally Gallagher, Associate Professor of Sociology, Oregon State University. *Other positions held in ASA*: Editorial Board Member, Rose Series in Sociology. 2003-2005. Roundtable Organizer, ASA Section on Religion, 2002. *Publications*: list up to 5 with the most recent listed first. *Evangelical Identity & Gendered Family Life*. 2003. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. Connections and constraints: The effects of children on kinkeeping. 2001. *Journal of*

Marriage and the Family. (Sally K. Gallagher and Naomi Gerstel). Men's caregiving: Gender and the contingent character of care. 2001. *Gender & Society*. (Naomi Gerstel and Sally K. Gallagher). Symbolic traditionalism and pragmatic egalitarianism: Contemporary evangelicals, families and gender. 1999. *Gender & Society*, 13 (2): 211-233. (Sally K. Gallagher and Christian Smith). *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Christian Smith, with Michael Emerson, Paul Kennedy, Sally K. Gallagher, and David Sikkink. 1998. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. *Awards/Honors*; list up to 5 with the most recent listed first. Constant H. Jacquet Research Award, from the Religious Research Association, for research, Assessing Religious Community. 2002. Pew Charitable Trust. Co-Investigator, Assessing Evangelical Identity and Influence in a Rapidly Changing Society. 1995-97. Research Fellow, Center for the Humanities, Oregon State University. Writing fellowship awarded for work on Making Do in Damascus: Gender, Class & Family Life. Fall 1997 Fulbright Scholar Award, J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, Council for International Exchange of Scholars, United States Information Agency. Serial Grant for research in Damascus, Syria. Spring/Summers. 1994-97. American Sociological Association/National Science Foundation Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline Grant. Title of Research, Crafting Lives: Gender, Work and Family among Women in Damascus. 1992

Student Representative to Council:

Amy Adamczak, Doctoral Student, Pennsylvania State University, August 2001. Research Associate, American Religion Data Archive. Pennsylvania State University, August 2001. *Other positions held in ASA*: None. *Publication*: Amy Adamczyk, 2002. "On Thanksgiving and Collective Memory: Constructing the American Tradition," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 15: 343-356. *Awards/Honors*: 2000, University Fellowship, Graduate School, CUNY. 1999, National Science Foundation Traineeship, Graduate School, CUNY. 1998, Institutional Fellowship, University of Chicago. 1998, Highest Honors (summa cum laude), Hunter College, CUNY. 1996, High Honors (magna cum laude), Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York

Kraig Beyerlein, Doctoral student, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Sociology, Summa Cum Laude, 1998. *Other ASA positions*: Publications: Beyerlein, Kraig and Mark Chaves. "The Political Activities of Religious Congregations in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (forthcoming); Beyerlein, Kraig. "Specifying the Impact of Conservative Protestantism on Educational Attainment." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (forthcoming); Beyerlein, Kraig. 2003. "Educational Elites and the Movement to Secularize Public Education: The Case of the National Education Association." Pp. 160-195. In Christian Smith (ed.). *The Secular Revolution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Chaves, Mark, Mary Ellen Konieczny, Kraig Beyerlein, and Emily Barman. 1999. "The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38:458-476. *Awards/Honors*: *Social Forces Award*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Sociology; *Pew Younger Scholars*, University of Notre Dame, three-year Graduate Student Fellowship.

In the Pipe

The following are dissertation abstracts from Ph.D candidates currently or soon-to-be on the job market.

Anna Xiao Dong Sun
Princeton University

Confusions over Confucianism: The Emergence of the World Religions Paradigm and the Construction of Confucianism as a Religion, 1870-1916.

For sociologists, religion scholars and historians of China, the confusions over the nature of Confucianism -- whether it is a religion -- have a long and complicated history. I argue that such confusions in the Western cultural discourse are not primarily the result of the Jesuits' invention of Confucianism in the 17th century, as some scholars suggested, but, rather, the product of a newly established intellectual discipline in the late 19th century, which is the scientific and comparative study of religions. This new intellectual field was where the emergence of the World Religions paradigm took place. It was during the period from the 1870s to 1920s that the paradigm shift occurred, and Confucianism became commonly viewed by European scholars as one of the great world religions. The world religions discourse is crucial to the development of Western religious pluralism, and my dissertation examines the historical and institutional conditions of this important beginning through the analysis of the case of Confucianism.

Michallene G. McDaniel
University of Georgia

Consuming the Spirit: New Age Books from the Readers' Perspectives

Throughout the 1990s, lists of best-selling books were dominated by titles from New Age spiritual authors. Despite this mainstream presence, the readers of these books remain largely unexamined. Through content analysis of reader reviews of New Age best sellers and follow-up interviews with reviewers, this dissertation looks at who is drawn to these spiritual materials and what impact they have on their lives. It also aims to understand what the movement of a once marginal form of spirituality into mainstream culture can tell us about contemporary religious markets and distribution mechanisms.

Spring Newsletter

The deadline for the spring 2003 newsletter is May 15. In addition to our regular content, I will be happy to consider any information a section member thinks would be of general section interest.

I invite section members to notify me of job searches in the 2003-04 job market that will not be "religion listings" but in which religion candidates are likely to be considered attractive because of faculty composition or other considerations. Please mention when and where the search announcement will appear. If there are enough such listings, I will run a special section pointing them out.

-DS

Beliefs continued from p.1

shape what *comes to be*, in ways they intend or do not intend? In other words, how do beliefs emerge to make sense of our relations, both egalitarian and hierarchical? How do the beliefs of the activists Munson interviewed help them to make sense of their worlds and their places in them?

I would like to show what I mean with an example from my own research on debates about homosexuality in United Methodist congregations. In observing these debates as a participant-observer and interviewer, I sought to understand members' conflicting views from their different perspectives. I observed that church members' beliefs about God, sin and other lofty topics seldom simply mirrored church doctrine. In Protestant denominations, the doctrine itself reflects the multiple opinions members hold on controversial issues. In telling me and each other about how they came to their understandings about God and God's will, members referred to their own experiences in talking with and observing their friends, neighbors, children and coworkers; listening to radio shows and watching movies and television; reading spiritual and secular books. In short, given their very Protestant notion that God's revelation can come to them where they are, they learned about God and God's will just about everywhere in their social worlds. As they developed their beliefs and understandings of God's message to them, however, the directions of their beliefs were limited by what they already knew; depending on prior knowledge, some ideas could change and others couldn't. Their everyday theologies, in Munson's terms, shaped both their goals and what they saw as appropriate means. To understand the contents of beliefs, we need to go beyond analyzing what they say overtly; we need to understand how people themselves came to their different beliefs, in their social contexts.

To illustrate, I'll use two members as examples. One belonged to a diverse United Methodist congregation with a theologically liberal clergy, and the other to a conservative-evangelical United Methodist congregation. Both used popular movies to demonstrate the veracity of their beliefs about homosexuality. The conservative, whom I call Pete, saw John Singleton's 1994 movie *Higher Learning*, which demonstrated to him that gay people are generally gay because of sexual abuse, and that churches should therefore work on welcoming gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to provide them with healing from the emotional wounds that caused their homosexuality. The movie affirmed his knowledge that homosexuality was sinful, but helped him to argue that the church overall needed to be more welcoming that it had been traditionally.

The liberal, on the other hand, whom I call Nancy, had believed that homosexuality was sinful, a rejection of God's plan, until she saw Stephen Elliott's 1994 movie *The Adventure of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. This movie showed Nancy that gay people were in pain, and that the "wild" things they did (such as performing as flamboyant drag queens) was a way to make themselves feel fabulous in the face of society's castigation.

Simply analyzing what they say overtly would not go far enough to understand these members' beliefs. I would imagine that few readers of this newsletter who saw either movie took away the same messages from them as these two people; certainly published summaries of the films reflect different central themes than these members took from them. People we study may attribute their beliefs to certain sources, but that does not mean that those sources necessarily produce the same beliefs for everyone. Phenomenology calls our attention to people as we/they produce these categories of

thought in everyday life. We need to explore in depth how these members used what they learned from the movies to make sense of their worlds.

We also need to explore the unintended effects of people's ways of making sense of the world. In both of the cases I have discussed, members wanted Christianity in general to be more welcoming to gay men and lesbians; Pete wanted to welcome them to help heal them of their homosexuality, and Nancy wanted to welcome them to help heal them of the pain cause by a hostile society. Both intended to welcome gay members as equals, yet in both cases, these members retained various forms of the authority heterosexuals have over non-heterosexuals. Heterosexuals are the traditional writers of doctrine, and by policy the only ones effectively allowed to transmit doctrine by serving as clergy the United Methodist Church (which is hardly alone in this among religious bodies). These members, in their beliefs, continue to legitimate that pattern of authority.

Since this authority might be clear to many readers in Pete's case, I will focus on Nancy. Nancy wanted the church to welcome and affirm homosexuals publicly. Yet in the way she articulated her beliefs, she unintentionally retained the authority to define the terms of membership. In response to the concerns a fellow member expressed at a small meeting about accepting homosexuality, she remarked:

"I too was at a point of thinking about society collapsing, I had feared that we would be saying anything goes about God's intentions for us, and thinking, "If people choose to reject God's plan for us, to reject their creative ability God has given us, then they are rejecting God." But then I came to think about the pain the homosexuals must be feeling, all the rejection that comes from the social structure. And, I just saw the movie "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," and that movie is really shocking, to see the pain people are in that they feel they have to do such wild things to be able to say, "this is who I am."

By seeing gay people as pained, Nancy was able to see them as painfully rejected by the church, as opposed to rejecting God. If the church overall were to heal this pain, it had to welcome gay people.

But in positing gay and lesbian church membership on being pained, Nancy and the many others who invoked this formula inadvertently created a new hierarchy of heterosexual over homosexual. If gay men and lesbians are welcomed because they are in pain, then what of those who are not feeling pain? What about those who are angry at the church for its audacity to tell them what God can and cannot tell them about how to live their lives? What about those who are neither pained nor angry, but are just fine, thanks?

In positing welcome on the belief that the church's wrong in its policies towards gay men and lesbians has been in causing them pain, Nancy and the numerous other pro-gay members who used this language inadvertently suggested that their congregation or denomination would welcome gay members only to the extent that the latter could show themselves to be in pain. This language thus effectively denied gay men and lesbians the opportunity to celebrate joy and wholeness in the congregation, to express the full range of human emotion, while other members took such celebrations as central to their church experience.

Without her intending to, Nancy's beliefs helped to enforce the hierarchy of unmarked, presumed heterosexual members over those marked as homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, or otherwise non-normative. This brings us to a point where we can push beyond

Berger's phenomenological approach to a final point I'd like to make about the study of beliefs.

People believe different things, and sociologists should, as Munson suggests, seek to understand how these different beliefs come about and make sense to people. Beyond that, however, we can examine people's beliefs critically to see how these beliefs shed light on the ways that people produce and reproduce relations of power and privilege in everyday life. In the sociology of religion, we study people who deal everyday with immense power and intense experiences of it. We should use the tools at our disposal to understand what people make of such power, how they understand it, and the very complicated ways by which they intentionally and unintentionally convey it to others.

Response to Moon

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Dawne Moon suggests that sociologists of religion look to phenomenology as a promising means for better analyzing the causes and consequences of religious beliefs. Certainly the phenomenological approach has an important role to play in improving our understanding of beliefs, and I am pleased that my short essay provoked such a thoughtful response. Moon also uses two individuals from her own research on debates over sexuality in United Methodist churches to provide an example of the kind of analysis she has in mind. The exercise is a helpful one for understanding the possibilities of phenomenology. I would add, however, that it also provides an example of the limitation of the approach.

I wholeheartedly agree with Moon that any discussion of belief formation needs to take into account a person's social and material worlds. Context and biography are everything here. I am not as confident as Moon, however, that sociologists can identify the effects that beliefs have on an individual's larger worldview using phenomenological interpretation. Take Moon's example of Nancy, whose belief that gay men and lesbians are pained by social rejection and thus should be welcomed into the church. Moon's interpretation of this belief underscores how it reproduces a power hierarchy of heterosexuals over non-heterosexuals. The interpretation is persuasive and it is plausible that Nancy's belief do perpetuate such a hierarchy. It is also possible, however, that her belief has no such impact. The only way we can know for sure is to look at other aspects of Nancy's worldview or biography for evidence that she has considered the issue of heterosexual versus non-heterosexual power and linked it to the social rejection of heterosexuals and their resulting pain.

The point here is that particular beliefs are seldom if ever constituted by just a single meaning. What matters for understanding Nancy and her social role is how she herself interprets her own beliefs and

connects them other ideas and values. Beliefs can have different and changing meanings. Take the example of 'queer' as a label for those who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered. The term was originally one of stigmatization, and the meaning was one of hatred and intolerance. The non-heterosexual community has appropriated the term, however, and it now can also convey a sense of community, group solidarity, and social empowerment.

Allow me to provide a further example from my own research on the abortion debate. One of the key beliefs many interpret as the basis for support of abortion rights is the belief in women's rights. The only way women can be equal to men, have equal opportunities to jobs, equal power in families, and an equal standing in sexual relationships is through the availability of safe and legal abortion services. Like Moon's interpretation of Nancy's beliefs about gay and lesbians in the church, this interpretation strikes me as plausible even—from my own social position—intuitively obvious.

Some on the pro-life side of the debate, however, interpret support for women's rights in exactly the opposite way. They understand abortion as a tool of men to further objectify and sexualize women. They see it as a means for men to take advantage of women by opting out of the full implications of a sexual relationship, and in some cases to hide instances of rape and incest. Far from empowering women, they believe abortion is the result of ignorance and feelings of hopelessness perpetrated on women by men. As the result of these beliefs about abortion, activists can understand belief in women's rights as a basis for opposition to legalization abortion, not support. One activist in Boston put it this way: "I look at it as abandonment of women by men. All male Supreme Court. Male dominated legislatures. Male dominated corporations that kept abortion legal...It is men that abortion really liberated."

As these examples demonstrate, beliefs can have a range of different interpretations, in some cases interpretations that are polar opposites. I don't think this point is controversial, but perhaps its implications are less well accepted: The consequences of beliefs will be strikingly different depending on how they are related to other ideas in a person's worldview. The potential relationships between beliefs are almost limitless, and thus our job as sociologists needs to focus on teasing out how people themselves interpret their different beliefs in the context of their everyday lives.

The phenomenological approach advocated by Moon makes a solid contribution to this goal, especially in the way it usefully lays bare the power and hierarchy that lie behind all social relationships. Ultimately, however, other tools will be required as well. One of the reasons I find the distinction between beliefs about means and beliefs about ends attractive (other than the empirical data indicating such a distinction is important!) is that it allows a person's beliefs to be analyzed without imposing any external framework on how beliefs ought to be logically or sociologically connected. We need to take beliefs seriously in their own terms, without attachment to the more abstract concepts of sociology, before we will be able to finally hang religious beliefs on the pegs these concepts make available to us.