AHRC/ESRC RELIGION & SOCIETY PROGRAMME
RELEMERGE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Innovative Methods in the Study of Religion Conference
29th/30th March 2010
The Rouble Suite, Dexter House, 2 Royal Mint Court, London EC3N 4QN

PROGRAMME

Monday, 29th March 2010 (Day 1)

9.30 a.m.	Registration & coffee – 3rd floor foyer, Dexter House
10.30 – 11.15 a.m.	Rouble Suite **Plenary: Autobiographical Reflections on Method** Lori Beaman is author of *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law,* **and studies religion through the lens of law** David Morgan is author of *The Lure of Images: A History of Religion and Visual Media in America* **and has pioneered the study of religion through material culture** Isabel Rivers is author of *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780*, 2 vols, and is involved a major cross-disciplinary study of dissenting education in Britain

11.30 – 1.00 p.m.	Rouble Room LW **Combined Methods 1** (Chair – Singh) Gauthier Khan Tarlo	Kopek Room RC **Discourse and Tacit Knowing** (Chair -Weller) Harris, A Power Todd	Peso Room RH **Religion and Location** (Chair – McAndrew) Gray & O'Sullivan Gregory & Cunningham Valentine et al

1.00 – 2.00 p.m.	Mint Restaurant **Lunch**

Monday, 29th March 2010 (Day 1) Continued …

2.00 – 3.30 p.m.	Rouble Room RH **Researching Material Culture** (Chair - Vis) Connelly & Hebbert Harper Knowles Vassenden	Kopek Room RC **New Approaches to Sensitive Research** (Chair – Todd) Adamson et al Gilliat-Ray Johnsen van Eck Duymaer van Twist	Peso Room LW **'Disciplining' the Study of Religion (Panel)** Zene (Chair) Hawthorne Lobetti Tremlett
3.30 – 4.00 p.m.	Rouble Suite foyer **Afternoon tea**		
4.00 – 5.30 p.m.	Rouble Suite **Plenary** **Researching 'Religion': The Conceptual Implications of Method, and the Methodological Implications of a Concept** Granholm, Lynch, Martikainen (See abstracts)		
6.30 p.m.	**Dinner at Ping Pong Dim Sum Restaurant**		

Tuesday, 30th March 2010 (Day 2)

8.30 a.m.	Registration		
9.00 – 10.30 a.m.	Rouble Room_RH **Multimedia Research** (Chair – McAndrew) Haw Moors Poole & Taira Vis	Kopek Room_RC **Method and the Category of 'Religion'** (Chair – Catto) Guo Salomaa Weller	Peso Room_LW **Collaborative Research Methods in the Humanities (Panel)** Rivers (Chair) Dixon, S Roberts & Dixon, R Gartner & Iourinski
10.30 – 11.00 a.m.	Rouble Suite Foyer **Morning Coffee**		
11.00 – 12.30 p.m.	Rouble Room_RH **Participatory Action Research** (Chair - Wolffe) Harris, C Pain et al Cameron	Kopek Room_LW **Developments in Qualitative Psychology of Religion (Panel)** Selvam Coyle (Chair), Steffen & Jackson Collicutt	Peso Room_RC **Online Survey Research & Dissemination** (Chair – Vis) Keenan, Yip & Page McAndrew & Field Madge & Hemming
12.30 – 1.30 p.m.	Mint Restaurant **Lunch**		

Tuesday, 30th March 2010 (Day 2) Continued ….

1.30 – 3.00 p.m.	Rouble Room RC **Integrating Historical Research (Panel)** Wolffe (Chair) Stanton Maiden Jacob	Kopek Room RH **Qualitative Longitudinal Research (Panel)** Bowman Dodson & Zaid Day (Chair)	Peso Room LW **Combined Methods 2** (Chair – Tarlo) Conroy Devine & White Molle
3.00 – 3.20 p.m.	Rouble Suite Foyer **Afternoon tea**		
3.20 – 5.00 p.m.	Rouble Suite **Plenary: 'Insider' and 'Outsider' Methodological Experts Reflect on the Conference - followed by Plenary Discussion** Andrew Sayer is author of *Method in Social Science* and *Realism and Social Science* Ole Riis is author of Danish volumes on method in the study of religion, and combined methods		
5.00 p.m.	**Close**		

Methodological issues in researching Spirituality in Contemporary Funerals

Margaret Holloway, University of Hull
Sue Adamson, University of Hull
Vassos Argyrou, University of Hull
Peter Draper, University of Hull
Daniel Mariau, University of Hull

This paper discusses the methodological issues encountered in an AHRC funded study completing in March 2010. Through a focus on contemporary funerals, this aimed to explore: the changing nature of belief in contemporary society; the search for rituals and practices to express contemporary spiritualities; the impact of secularising and postmodern trends on an established socio-religious event (the funeral); the ascription of meaning, both individual and subjective and socially prescribed; the connections between meaning and identity, including spiritual and religious identities; and the ethnically diverse and pluralist contexts in which these phenomena are played out. The research involved case studies of around 50 funerals, and 30 interviews with professionals involved in the funeral industry. Each case study comprised: observation of pre-funeral meetings between families and funeral directors and celebrants; observation of the funeral; a post-funeral focused interview with the bereaved person(s). The paper will consider the ethics and practical factors, both in accessing a sample and in developing the research relationship, in conducting research around a sensitive event where participants may be vulnerable. It will describe the process of analysis of the data obtained concerning religious and other beliefs and comment on the value and difficulties of a multidisciplinary approach.

"Spiritual Journeys, Research Journey: New Methods for a New Area of Inquiry"

Nancy Alexander, University of Lancaster

Despite wide use in the U.S. of the phrase, "I'm on a spiritual journey", the small group of academicians who have noted it have not defined the term. This research in process proposes to explore the meaning and importance of the metaphor, create a working definition and conceptual "map" of the journey, and suggest gender differences. Primarily qualitative, it focuses on "concept formation, elaboration, and refinement" (Ragin 2004).

How does one study people's journeys, and in the process open a new area of academic inquiry? This mixed-method research design begins with a short survey to uncover and suggest the prevalence of the spiritual journey phenomenon. At the heart of the research are case studies in the form of autoethnographical, active interviews, in which participants share physical artifacts and documents ("souvenirs"), visit significant sites, reflect on, synthesize, and create visual representations of their journeys; the interviews may even form a *part* of their spiritual journeys. The participants will then work in focus groups to co-create the definition and map.

The researcher is an "observing participant" (Anderson, National Science Foundation 2004) and the subject-researcher relationship is intended to be non-hierarchical, collaborative, iterative, and intuitive, not pre-scripted but a joint improvisational production.

"Theological Action Research". A formative method for theology and for practice.

Helen Cameron *on behalf of the ARCS team.*
(Helen Cameron, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, Clare Watkins)

The paper presents a methodology developed over a number of years by the research team 'Action research - Church and Society (ARCS)*. The methodology is described as 'Theological Action Research', and has been worked out through co-operative research with nine outreach initiatives working in Roman Catholic and Anglican contexts.

The paper sets out the thinking behind Theological Action Research (TAR), drawing attention to significant characteristic features: the commitment to a thoroughly *theological* use of action research; the concomitant theological complexity then involved, and its systematisation into a 'four voices' approach; the resultant discursive method of TAR; its formative and transformative effects for *both* practice *and* theology.

This methodology is tested through case studies from the ARCS research. Evidence is given *both* of the theologically (trans)formative effects of TAR for the practitioners involved; and of the theological learning that TAR offers the 'academic' theologian. In the first instance, a claim is made for the transformation of practice through the practitioner commitment to a specifically *theological* reflective practice. Secondly, ecclesiological and sacramental points of learning are identified for the theologian from the emergent data.

*See http://www.rcc.ac.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=research.content&cmid=104 for details of the team

"Learning from Buildings: typological method in the collaborative project *Methodist Central Halls as Public Sacred Spaces*'

Angela Connelly, University of Manchester
Michael Hebbert, University of Manchester

Central Halls exist in every town and city and are the most tangible high water mark of Methodist witness in British society, but they have never been systematically studied - even their number and locations were unknown until tabulated by the AHRC/ESRC project *Methodist Central Halls as Public Sacred Spaces.*

Our paper begins with the distinctive research orientation of MARC, the Manchester Architecture Research Centre, towards social studies of architecture. We explain the concept of building type and the dimensions of social and cultural analysis that may be explored through typology.

The method is then demonstrated through our work on Methodist Central Halls from the 1880s to the present. The doctoral project, now approaching completion, has combined an overarching national narrative with six case studies of individual halls. Analysis of the building type offers insights into many aspects of Methodism through the long twentieth century - the church's spatial distribution, its modes of mission and worship, its cultural identity and its business model.

Furthermore, these centrally located assembly halls with their landmark architecture are for many towns still the top venues for meetings and entertainment.. The typology of such *public* sacred spaces is not only a chapter in the history of Methodism, it provides findings of wide interest for religion and society.

Does Religious Education Work? An Analysis of the Aims, Practices & Models of Effectiveness in Religious Education across the UK

Jim Conroy, University of Glasgow

This paper provides an overview of the research methodology and underpinning rationale adopted by a major three-year (Jan 2009-Dec 2010) project undertaken by the Centre for Studies in Faith, Culture and Education at Glasgow University. The project is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council's Religion and Society programme and is intended to create the single most comprehensive study to date of the state of religious education across the combined jurisdictions of the United Kingdom.

The study uses a combination of discourse analysis on policy, philosophical reflection on coherence and ethnographic study of experience to explore the various claims made with respect to Religious Education in the domain of Religious Education in secondary schooling across the very different contexts of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The mixture of philosophical, theological and detailed ethnographic approaches used by the multi-disciplinary research team allows for a substantial analysis of the aims, pedagogical practices and models of effectiveness of Religious Education in twenty-four secondary schools across the UK and draws on a range of theoretical perspectives including philosophical analyses of ontological, epistemological and cultural **enstrangement** and contact theory.

It can be argued that, until recently, religious education theory and practice has suffered from being under-researched and under-theorised and lacking the theoretical insights and resources of the social sciences in particular. This project is seen as offering an important corrective to this situation and aims to make a major contribution to the establishment of a substantial, multi-faceted evidence base enabling subtle comparisons of aims and practices across the social and schooling spectrum.

Preliminary findings would suggest that high ranking professionals who appear to make policy are less influential than is popularly imagined (most especially by themselves). Those who create resources and who structure assessment convey much greater influence in shaping the experience of students. Moreover, these preliminary findings also point to the emergence of a range of interesting discursive gaps between the prosaic descriptive language of religious and ethical concern and the theological and spiritual import.

Researching Religion and wellbeing in India and Bangladesh. A methodological journey.

Joe Devine, University of Bath
Shreya Jha, University of Bath
Sarah C. White, University of Bath

This paper reflects on the experience of undertaking research on everyday religion and wellbeing in India and Bangladesh, to consider what this suggests about how religion may be understood in South Asia. In particular, it introduces a series of tensions: between tangible and intangible; between saturated and elusive; between exogenous and embedded. It describes the experience of attempting to capture religion through a mixed method approach, involving community profiles, a quantitative survey, and qualitative interviews and focus groups. These sought to explore three faces of religion: as social identity; as organisations; and within subjectivity. It describes the different ways that research partners understood what the research might be about, and how this affected the shape the study might take. It reflects on the conundrum of asking people about religion in South Asia, as at once a public and intimate matter, and how this challenges dominant approaches to religion in the social science literature.

Where is the youth? *Déjà* heard 'innovative' reflections on the study of youth and religion

François Gauthier, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

Using the experience of co-editing a recent book on the topic of youth and religion in Quebec as a primer, this paper voices some reflections at the crossing of method and epistemology, arguing that both are intrinsically bound. The subject of youth and religion has received very little attention in Quebec apart from confessional perspectives deeply concerned with Catholicism's 'transmission crisis' and the ensuing 'alarming spiritual void'. While the Quiet Revolution saw an extremely rapid drop in churchgoing, social scientific work on youth and religion has been almost monolithically concerned with youth and Catholicism, be it in quantitative or qualitative work. The portrait is unsurprisingly that of decline as secularization 'ravages' or 'liberates' from religion (depending on the viewpoint) and consequently seems much more concerned with orthodox Catholicism and the Church's destiny than by youth. In addition to the obvious critique of similar reductions of religion to its traditional Christian institutional forms, the question I would like to ask then is this: If youth are inheritors of the baby boomers breakup with institutional religion and cannot consequently be found in church, *where are they*? This paper analyzes some of the reasons for this awkward ignorance of social sciences and suggests complementary methods and epistemological ground which may allow phenomena such as youth and religion be treated without either term ideologically thwarting.

Doing 'Sensitive' Research: some methodological, security, and spiritual implications of research with South Asian Muslim chaplains in Britain

Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Cardiff University

This paper offers a series of short reflections on some of the issues that have arisen during fieldwork undertaken as part of a project on Muslim chaplaincy in modern Britain.

Firstly, the intensive training that many Deobandi *'alims* (scholars) receive encourages a deep sense of humility and piety. Individuality and individual agency are discouraged. During the course of research, many chaplains found it impossible to answer interview questions that focused upon *the impact or value* of their chaplaincy practice. How have we tried to work around this methodological dilemma?

Secondly, our project has gathered extremely sensitive data…Muslim chaplains have given confidential accounts of their (confidential) pastoral work. Amid growing concerns about the security of data, I shall report briefly some of the steps taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of our data via digital means.

Thirdly, the paper reflects on the fact that similar qualities are required in both a good chaplain, and a good qualitative researcher. In both cases, good communication skills, empathy, and an ability to retain confidential data, are paramount. Arguably however, both chaplain and researcher must 'suspend' self in order to focus on 'the other', and this requires a particular openness of spirit.

New Arenas of Religion and the Demand for New Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

Kennet Granholm, Stockholm University

The visibility of religion in the public sphere is increasing in the contemporary West. However, religion also increasingly operates in ways which are commonly not regarded "religious" at all, such as functioning as entertainment and pastime (e.g. in different fields of popular culture and secular media). This puts the

classic conceptualization of religion as dealing with "ultimate concerns" into question, and requires that we approach and conceptualize our subject matter in new ways. The apparent superficiality of these religious engagements does not mean they would not have a considerable impact in people's construction of identity and worldview. A discursive approach, focusing on religion as communication rather than belief, is a suitable way of approaching the diverse contemporary religious field – as questions of "sufficient" levels of seriousness in people's religious practices along with approaches of determining what people "really" think or do when they engage with religion become irrelevant. What is also needed is a method which combines historical awareness (too often lacking in sociological approaches) with sociological method and theory (the lack of which puts e.g. the historical study of Western esotericism in a serious disadvantage when dealing with contemporary phenomena).

Researching a transnational church in a nation-state context. A case study of the Irish Catholic Church and migration politics

Breda Gray, University of Limerick
Ria O'Sullivan-Lago, University of Limerick

Religious communities and institutions pre-dated most in becoming transnational. However, the ways in which they are transnational vary in time and place. In contemporary Ireland, a traditionally emigrant Church is becoming increasingly immigrant and new forms of communication, travel and technologies are seen as intensifying church transnational practices particularly in work with migrants. In this paper, we report on our study which is analysing the interface between the Irish Catholic Church and the civil society activities of pro-migrant NGOs in the past decade, exploring transnational practices in transferring religious and social capital across borders. Our fieldwork involves interviews with Irish Catholic religious, immigrant chaplains, lay NGO workers and NGO funders. Although we see migration and the Catholic Church as transnational formations, our research is located within the nation-state of the Irish Republic at a time of dramatic change. Consequently, we are faced with the question of how to best adopt a transnational lens within a state-bounded research site. This paper will present some of the methodological tensions we are encountering, including: how to distinguish the boundaries between national and transnational; faith and politics; the universal and the Irish church; the institutional Church and the practices of individual religious members; immigrant and local church. Overall, it will be argued that the contours of the study site are unsettled by our methodological assumptions enabling new insights into the transnational dynamics between the Church and civil society activism at this moment in time.

Troubled Geographies: Ireland's religious divides in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Ian Gregory, University of Lancaster
Niall Cunningham, University of Lancaster

Religion in Ireland has been extensively studied its geography has been overlooked to an extent that may be considered remarkable given the territorial aspects of religious geographies. This paper explores how patterns of religious geography in Ireland have changed from the Famine period in the mid-nineteenth century, to the present day. In particular the paper explores the extent to which whether there has been change or stability over this time period and, when there has been change, whether it has been sudden in response to shocks such as Partition and the Civil War in the 1920s, or a more gradual process linked to longer-term demographic change. The paper combines a long-term study of the whole island with a short study of the period through the Northern Ireland Troubles from the late 1960s in which patterns of political and sectarian violence are also considered.

Artificial Intelligence and the Study of Religion

Ting Guo, University of Edinburgh

My paper will investigate the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) research as a distinctive phenomenon focusing on concepts of belief and transcendental, spiritual concepts of being, which brings out new meaning of religion and spirituality in the modern context by creating a new human species.

As both the agent and the object, and itself a creation of human beings through immanent practice, AI as such puts mankind into a paradox as both *creature* and *creator*. By simultaneously contributing to a better understanding of how both science and religion "works" and how the study of emergent spiritualities and religious movements cannot be limited to secularized categories, frameworks, and taxonomies that would posit humanistic science as a domain entirely distinct from the religious, I am seeking to provide some illumination as to the nature of spirituality in contemporary society. In sum, a critical analysis of AI from this perspective will offer a novel way to value modern practice and phenomenon and provide a unique perspective on broader research values in religious studies.

Releasing the latent: an approach to late medieval liturgy

John Harper, University of Bangor

Christian Scripture is read in both historical and contemporary contexts, but this is rarely the case for Christian liturgy or buildings. Of course, liturgical texts and buildings do not provide the self-sufficient narrative of Scripture; indeed they are far more akin to musical scores and instruments in their latency (for liturgy, like music, only exists when it is enacted). The extensive inheritance of late medieval liturgical buildings, music and artefacts surviving in Western Europe can seem at odds with contemporary parameters of worship; yet it is part of the continuing Christian story, a rich resource that needs to be understood in both the historical and contemporary contexts of worship, and not just as cultural heritage. This paper explores ways in which late medieval liturgical texts, buildings and artefacts might be investigated, the latency of medieval liturgy embodied in them realised and better understood, and nineteenth-century constructs stripped away.

Focusing on Embodied Knowing: An Embodied Hermeneutics

Adrian Harris, Roehampton University

The growing interest in the lived religion of personal practice (inter alia Mcguire 2008) brings methodological challenges: the beliefs and understandings of lived religion are not institutionalized or textual but grounded embodied knowing. How can we access this tacit knowing?

My research into embodied knowing in contemporary Paganism faced this problem early on: if embodied knowing is largely outside conscious awareness, how could I ask people about it?

I developed an embodied hermeneutics to articulate embodied knowing using Gendlin, who describes a "bodily sensed knowledge" - the 'felt sense' - which can be accessed through 'Focusing' (1981). Todres uses Focusing to explore "interembodied understanding" (Todres, 2007), and although it evolved independently, my methodology parallels his.

My Focusing Interview can enable a respondent to carry forward a felt sense to "complete and form" (Gendlin, 1964) an implicit meaning into one which is explicit and verbal. It also tunes the researchers

embodied sensitivity to the interview situation, helping to realise goal of "…raising intuition to the level of consciousness". My embodied hermeneutics develops the work McGuire, Gendlin and Todres and proved to be a powerful and flexible means of researching embodied knowing.

References:

Gendlin, E., 1981, *Focusing*, Bantam Dell, New York.

Todres, L., (2007). *Embodied Enquiry: Phenomenological Touchstones for Research, Psychotherapy and Spirituality*.Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire & New York

Mcguire, Meredith B. 2002, in *Personal Knowledge And Beyond: Reshaping The Ethnography Of Religion*, Spickard, Landres, and Mcguire, New York University Press.

-    2008, *Lived religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford University

Myerhoff, B. 'Jewish Comes Up in Your from the Roots, ' in *Number Our Days*, 1978, Simon and Schuster, New York, pp 232-61.

Innovative methods for researching Religion

Colette Harris, University of East Anglia

The kinds of methods to be used in researching religion will depend in the first place on what it is about religion that is to be researched. My own research is about the relationship between identity and religion in particular in regard to the use of religion for social and political control. Since gender plays such an important role in identity, one of my hypotheses in carrying out the research for my religion and society project was that the gender identities of the Muslim and Christian youth with whom I was working would be distinct, despite significant similarities in ethnic identity. In order to deconstruct gender identities I asked the youth with whom I was working to identify the male and female characteristics they found most important in their own particular communities. The ensuing discussions revealed a great deal about the role of religion and identity in this part of Nigeria. Further discussions with religious leaders gave me further insights into the connection between religion and identity in Kaduna. My paper will explain in more detail how these were uncovered and elucidate some of the most important characteristics.

'Voice' and Video as a Means of Creating Critical Dialogue Within the Participatory Research Process: From hijab to jilbab

Kaye Haw, University of Nottingham

Within an age in which visual imagery is challenging the authority of written text video has become quickly established in a range of research forms, from the academic to the applied and indeed video in this sense can be viewed as a nexus crossing domains and disciplines. Not only has the use of video grown in popularity because of the increased availability of new technology, and the relative increase in cost of direct observation, but also because of the cultural cache associated with it as a medium. Generally the methodological issues arising from the use of video within various forms of research is well documented. This ranges from visual ethnographers and anthropologists (Margolis, 1998, MacCanell, 1994, Banks, 1995) looking at peoples' construction of their lives and representation within the media to educational technologists using video to examine the learning of young people within classrooms (Noyes, 2004). The problem here though, is that these methodological discussions tend fall into several distinct 'camps' in

which the specific methodological issues of video usage within the research process either become submerged or 'bolted on' to the dominant methodological discourse within a particular field. This presents a fragmented body of work that makes it difficult for researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to the use of video and its potential as a research medium in the participatory process.

This paper draws on two recently completed projects. The first funded by the ESRC aimed to promote a critical dialogue within the research community around the methodological issues of working with video in participatory research aiming to give 'voice' to young people. Methodologically such projects are complex, and have a broader relevance, particularly when studying a complex phenomenon such as religion with various social locations and faces, due to:

- The complex relationships between researchers, practitioners and young people.
- The integration of technical and creative process within the research process.
- The intention to impact on a wide range of audiences.

The second was funded as part of the Religion and Society Programme. It was an inter-generational study of Muslim communities working with co-researchers who had participated, when at school, in a previous study carried out some 15 years earlier. Participating families made video diaries of their everyday lives and this was incorporated into a final DVD 'Being, Becoming and Belonging' aimed at triggering discussion amongst young people around issues of citizenship and multiculturalism. This paper will draw on the findings from the first project focussing on the methodological and ethical issues of working with video and using the participatory process of the second project to the illustrate key issues that arise in working this way on sensitive and complex issues to do with religion and identities.

Religion and rooflessness: ethical issues in conducting sensitive research with vulnerable groups

Sarah Johnsen, University of York

Drawing upon a recent study exploring homeless peoples' experiences of 'faith-based' and 'secular' support services (such as hostels, day centres and soup kitchens), this paper reflects on the ethical issues arising in research examining sensitive topics with vulnerable groups. In particular, it considers the implications of bringing issues of faith, religion and/or spirituality into conversations with interviewees who are in crisis situations and may be experiencing multiple forms of 'deep' social exclusion such as street homelessness, drug/alcohol addiction and/or mental health problems. The paper will conclude with some brief reflections on the positionality of the researcher in studies exploring matters of religion/faith, and its influence on the reception of findings by different audiences.

Making plans, paying attention to detail and getting a good fit: researching the sexual attitudes and practices of religious young adults.

Michael Keenan, Nottingham Trent University
Andrew Yip, Nottingham University
Sarah Jane Page, Nottingham University

Drawing upon an AHRC/ESRC-funded project entitled 'Religion, Youth and Sexuality: A Multi-faith Exploration', this paper reflects on the research team's decision-making and experiences in the planning and implementation of certain aspects of the research design. As this project is ongoing, our reflections are therefore tentative to a certain extent. The research methods employed by the project are: (1) online/e-mail/printed questionnaire; (2) semi-structured interview; and (3) video diary.

Our reflections can be divided into three themes:

1. Making Plans: Here the paper reflects on the construction of the research design, informed by the primary aims of the project. In doing so it reflects the inter-relationships between theory and method; and how the methods employed complement each other to generate extensive quantitative and in-depth qualitative data.

2. Paying attention to detail: The research team felt strongly the need to be able to explore the influence of faith in respondents' everyday lives. The sociology of religion often downplays these significant everyday occurrences. This detail is specifically explored in the project through the use of video diaries. Here the paper will reflect on the reasons why this method is so important to the project and our experiences of implementing this method (although this stage of the fieldwork will be in progress at the time of the conference).

 3. Getting a good fit: Finally, it is important the methods undertaken in research connect with the research population. The RYS project particularly connects with its young adult respondents through embracing relevant technologies and giving space for self-reflection. Here the paper specifically reflects on the appropriateness of online questionnaires and video diaries.

Critical reflections on researching religious nurture

Asma Khan, University of Cardiff

This paper will offer some (self) critical reflections on some of methods used in the AHRC/ESRC project 'Religious Nurture in Muslim Families'. The methods discussed are not innovative in themselves. They are familiar enough in social science research and will have been used to varying degrees within sociological studies of religion. They may, however, be considered innovative in their application to research on the religiosity of Muslim families in the UK, and particularly research which looks at the issue of religious transmission. (Most existing research on religious transmission is solely quantitative in design and is focused on Christianity). There is a lack of academic publications, based on actual fieldwork experiences, which critically reflect on methodological issues in research with Muslims families in the UK and this paper goes some way towards addressing this issue. The methodological issues discussed are as follows:
- Statistical analysis of individual-level data on religious transmission in three generations of the same family.
- The variety of innovative recruitment methods used for recruiting a socially and religiously diverse sample.
- Reflections on the benefits and challenges of an inter-disciplinary, ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse team.
- The use of audio and photo diaries with children.
- Interviews with very young children.

Photography, Religion and Urban Landscape

Caroline Knowles, Goldsmiths.

Based on the London data from the NORFACE 'Architecture of Contemporary Religious Transmission' project this paper discusses the issues posed by ethnographies capturing snapshots of global migration through the staging of religious worship. It focuses on Nigerian Catholic congregations in North London as observation posts for the chains of (un)settlement composing in-migration. In doing so it questions the

efficacy of photographic and video methods and the relationship between what we see and what we know.

Searching for religion and the sacred in media and popular culture

Gordon Lynch, Birkbeck College

This paper reviews methodological developments in the study of religion, media and culture over the past decade, noting important areas for future reflection. This paper traces significant theoretical and methodological shifts during this period, for example discussing the significance of the shift from the study of textual content to the study of life-worlds, and the recovery of the sacred as a concept for framing the study of media and culture. Whilst researchers from disciplines such as media studies and anthropology often bring a strong methodological training to this field, researchers from religious studies have not always had such a strong methodological orientation. The author's own attempts (Lynch, 2005, 2007) to develop such methodological reflection within religious studies are briefly discussed. Although evidence of increasing methodological sophistication amongst researchers within religious studies is to be welcomed, it is also important that the field does not become too lead purely by advanced methodological issues to the detriment of theoretical concerns or an awareness of the nature of the role of this scholarship as a form of cultural and political intervention. The future challenge of integrating reflexivity, theoretical awareness and methodological sophistication in this field is discussed.

Youth On Religion: The use of an online questionnaire to investigate the role of religion in young people's lives

Nicola Madge, Brunel University
Peter Hemming, Brunel University

The first stage of the *Youth On Religion* project is to carry out a large-scale survey of young people at secondary schools in several areas of the country. The purpose of this survey is to provide a picture of the meaning of religion in young people's lives, whatever their religion and whether or not they are religious, and to highlight questions and issues to be addressed in more detail in the second qualitative stage. This paper considers some of the methodological, practical and ethical issues inherent in using survey methods to investigate religion and youth, and the advantages and disadvantages of paper and internet-based surveys. Specifically, and drawing on experiences from the YOR project, it provides a critical discussion of the challenges faced in deciding to use an online questionnaire in our research, choosing the survey tool to be employed, selecting appropriate content and suitably wording the questions, administering the survey in schools, and ensuring a high level of consistency in data collection across research sites. New technologies are important for engaging the interests of the latest generation of young people – but useful only if they generate valid and reliable information.

Researching 'Religion' in neo-liberal context

Tuomas Martikainen, Åbo Akademi University

The neoliberal impulse of global capitalism and associated political changes in western states are posing a challenge to the study of religion. Among others, supranational forms of governance, new public management, outsourcing and community-based politics are trends that unite most western societies. Historical models of state-church relations are limited in explaining the scope and background of these changes, even though they cast light on the particular forms that emerge. As such the very notion of 'religion' is transforming in public space, administration and everyday life. The paper discusses the

implications of this shift, and argues that methods of collecting data and methods of analysis should be tuned accordingly; and that new methods and forms of analysis are changing the way we conceptualise religion and 'public religion'. Examples to highlight these transformations will be based on recent changes in Finland.

British Religion in Numbers: Innovation in Access to Religious Data

Siobhan McAndrew, University of Manchester
Clive Field, University of Birmingham

British Religion in Numbers (BRIN), an online data resource funded by the Religion and Society Programme, is being launched in 2010. It will serve a wide range of users: researchers, policy-makers, those working within religious organisations, the media and the general public. BRIN provides the following: a searchable database documenting the full range of historical and contemporary religious statistics in Britain, covering organisational, governmental, academic survey and opinion poll data; essay guides to their use and interpretation; and tables and charts exhibiting the information most in demand, including figures illustrating change over time. These time series will cover a range of commonly-cited measures including religious affiliation and membership, attendance, belief in God, numbers of ministry, and so on. We will demonstrate BRIN's core features, especially its interactive tools.

BRIN aims to be innovative in its presentation of data sources via digital media, through integrating quantitative historical and sociological approaches to religion, and through providing a bridge to religious data for those working outside academic quantitative sociology. To place BRIN in its methodological context, we also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the data, and the uses and abuses of statistics in studying religion in Britain. We consider the evolution of survey research and religious censuses in historical perspective, and evaluate current weaknesses in coverage. Finally, we look to the opportunities and challenges provided by webometrics, social networking sites, and the Government's 'Beyond 2011' programme.

Grounded Theory Driven Agent-Based Simulations (GTDABMS): exploring the potential of a new integrated methodology to the study of religious terrorism.

Andrea Molle, University of Padova

The paper addresses the issue of religious terrorism proposing a way to combine the methodologies of Grounded Theory and Agent-Based Simulation. The presentation is positioned within a body of work that seeks to understand the relevance of religion in connection with emerging forms of globalised terrorism, and the cultural significance of new religious movements with particular reference to their apocalyptic doctrines. A discussion of Agent-Based Simulation and Grounded Theory from a sociological perspective is presented. We begin by defining the two approaches by positioning them with respect to the issue of the religious research area. We then discuss how an integrated approach may be helpful for the study of such religious terrorism.

From a theoretical standpoint, religious terrorism exhibits characteristics which can be labelled as complex, a condition in which agent behaviour and social interaction combine to generate macro-level outcomes that could not easily be analysed from knowledge of the behaviour and nature of micro-interactions alone. Thus, from a methodological angle, by its very nature, any qualitative study would not provide an adequate representation if it does not cover the deeply rooted features that characterize violent new religions. On the other hand, also quantitative statistical

data are scarce and unreliable in the context of apocalyptic terrorism, constraining the scope of applicable methodological tools.

This is the reason Agent-Based simulation seems to be a particularly adequate choice of methodology, considering the complexity of the situation and the type of questions that are normally addressed with this topic, and Grounded Theory offers a complete vision of how to do bottom-up oriented and theoretically consistent research. The main issue that is pointed out is that by means of the proposed combined approach the researcher would be able to "discover generated ideas" rather than describe events or test hypothesis using a simple collection of data followed by the analysis.

"Discover the beauty of modesty": Webstores, Islamic fashion and public Islam

Annelies Moors, University of Amsterdam

Islamic fashion web stores are sites where e-commerce, ethics and aesthetics come together. They are both a node in the circulation of material goods (items of dress) and a space where concepts such as 'Islamic fashion' are produced and where Islam is presented online. Bringing together images, texts, and occasionally also sound, these web stores inform the public about economic value, aesthetic styles and Islamic piety and attempt to persuade them to buy their products and to dress in a manner which fuses stylishness and modesty.

This paper addresses the double move from Muslim dress to Islamic fashion and from off-line marketing to online web stores. Discussing fashion not as a particular aesthetics, but rather in temporal terms as rapid change in styles of dress, this paper addresses how Islamic forms, such a wearing *hijab* (covered dress), are structured through the fashion discourse. The main part of the paper discusses web stores as a particular mode of presenting Islamic fashion online. Since their emergence in the late 1990s, Islamic fashion web stores have become increasingly sophisticated in linking into other formats of Islamic fashion online, such as weblogs, YouTube videos, and facebook fan pages. Still, there are major differences between off line stores and web stores, in terms of the presentation of garments, interactions between store owners and the public, and the engagements of the public with items of dress.

This paper discusses the various ways in which web store owners Islamize their webstores. Through looking at images and reading texts – that center on garments, on Islam and on the nexus of both - the public engages with these web stores. While web store owners' presentations of Islamic fashion in some ways tie in with specific Islamic traditions, the formats through which these web stores work are structured by both the fashion discourse and their online presence.

Hanging out and hanging on: researching religion amongst economically marginalized youth

Rachel Pain, Durham University
Elizabeth Olson, University of Edinburgh
Giselle Vincett, University of Edinburgh
Eduardo Serafin, University of Edinburgh
Peter Hopkins, Newcastle University

This paper discusses the conceptual and practical approaches deployed to study the spiritual lives of young people living in economically deprived areas of the UK. We begin by describing some of the difficulties of conducting research on religion with young people and in 'poor' places in the UK which are often beset by rapid demographic or physical transformation of neighbourhoods and other kinds of uncertainty. We then consider our selected methodologies – best summed up as 'hanging out' and 'hanging on' – and their effectiveness in accessing the meanings and beliefs of these British youth. By deploying a range of

techniques including ethnography, interviews, workshops and participatory video production, we create a multi-layered and often contradictory image of young people's spiritual and religious lives. We conclude by considering the implications of our experiences for the broader study of youth, spirituality and religiosity.

Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred

Elizabeth Poole, University of Staffordshire
Teemu Taira, University of Leeds
Kim Knott, University of Leeds

This paper details the methodology of the AHRC project 'Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred', a 2 year study examining representations of religion in the British media and their reception. The methods are complex in that they are longitudinal, comparative and triangulated. The study seeks to compare data from a previous project 'Media Portrayals of Religion and their Reception', 1982/3, from the University of Leeds. This comprised of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of media outputs from newspapers taken over a two-month period, plus an additional event analysis, and television recorded over a seven day period as well as a questionnaire survey. Whilst seeking to replicate the methods of this study to enable a comparative analysis the team have been confronted with issues raised by changes in the media and in developments in understanding the media over the last 30 years. The aim of team is to examine differences in representation based on changing perceptions of religion and its place in the public sphere in this time. However, the challenge has been whether this is possible in simply replicating the methods of the past. This paper will reflect on these challenges, discuss the solutions followed and consider other issues raised by undertaking a variety of research methods.

Talking Religious Identity

Kate Power, Lancaster University

This paper argues for a focus on the "social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:258) of "talking [religious] identity" (Hadden and Lester 1978) by demonstrating the usefulness of two discourse analytic frameworks to the study of religion. In particular, it shows that Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) (Hester and Eglin 1997; Lepper 2000; Schegloff 2007) and stance Analysis (Du Bois 2007; Englebretson 2007; Jaffe 2009; Kockelman 2004) both shed light on the discursive construal of religious identity, conceptualized here as a "transportable" (Zimmerman 1998: 90-91) discursive accomplishment. As a case study based on thirty one qualitative interviews and two group discussions conducted in rural Canada, this paper has an intentionally local focus. It does not claim to represent Canada or other parts of the world. Nor does it address the discourse of religious élites. Rather, it provides a detailed analysis of how individuals in one location produce a sense of their own religious affiliation and/or differentiation in conversation – both directly, by discussing religion, and indirectly in talk about other matters. The analysis presented in this paper is applicable, however, to studying both (i) the subject positions construed by religious institutions, and (ii) the representation of religion in mass media and other contexts.

Kate Power is a doctoral candidate in Applied Linguistics at Lancaster University, with Masters' degrees in English and Christian Studies. Prior to immigrating to Canada, she worked as a Community Consultant in the Settlement and Multicultural Affairs Branch of the Australian Immigration Department. Her current research involves critical discourse analysis and the discursive construal of religious identities in rural Canada.

REFERENCES:

Du Bois, John W. (2007), 'The stance triangle', in Robert Englebretson (ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (Amsterdam: Benjamins), 139-82.

Englebretson, Robert (ed.), (2007), *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins).

Hester, Stephen and Eglin, Peter (1997), 'Membership Categorization Analysis: An Introduction', in S. Hester and P. Eglin (eds.), *Culture in Action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis* (Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, 4; Washington, D.C.: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis & University Press of America.), 1-24.

Jaffe, Alexandra (ed.), (2009), *Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, eds. Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics, Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Kockelman, Paul (2004), 'Stance and subjectivity', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology,* 14, 127-50.

Lepper, Georgia (2000), *Categories in Text and Talk* (London: Sage).

Schegloff, Emanuel A. (2007), 'A tutorial on membership categorization', *Journal of Pragmatics,* 39, 462-82.

Zimmerman, D.H. (1998), 'Identity, Context and Interaction', in C. Antaki and S. Widdicombe (eds.), *Identities in Talk* (London: Sage), 87-106.

Comprehensive Design in Social Research on Religion

Ole Riis, Agder University

Introduction

Social problems are complex, but social researchers generally reduce the complexity by focusing on a singular dimension in order to fit the problem to the available methodological toolbox. (Riis: 2005) The challenge of complexity is also present when 'religion' is involved. The term was coined in a European historical context and is associated with the institutionalization of Christianity through the public establishment of a church. Religion is thereby investigated either its institutional status in society or its status in individual agents' lives. Thereby, the complex involvement of unchurched, implicit forms of religion in late modern society is missed. Some of these forms are dismissed as not properly or seriously religious. Still, religious themes pervade late modern culture and spiritual concerns influences life in late modern society in many ways. Social research may contribute to illuminate the presence of religion in the life of late modern society. However, this calls for comprehensive research designs which go beyond the standard quantitative and qualitative approaches presented by basic textbooks. Complex problems call for recognizing how different research designs can be combined, either through major projects using mixed methods or as a synthesis of a series of single-method studies.This presentation argues for comprehensive designs which enable researchers as a collective to confront the complexity of social problems. Complexity involves both a creative combination of classic designs and creativity and flexibility during research. A single project may have to follow a limited, classic design, due to limitations in time, workpower and economy. However, this must be seen as a addition to a set of projects which together can illuminate the basic research problem in its complexity. (Extract from full paper)

Learning from the past: The history of science and learning in comparative religion and its undefined methods

Ilona Salomaa, University of Helsinki

The purpose of my paper is to analyse the complex position of the history of science and learning within comparative religion. Many scholars examine the past of comparative religion and analyse questions about the origin of the study of religion. They are not studying the history of religions as such but the past of their own discipline. They are thinking and knowing about religion in a historical context. Furthermore, they

endeavour to understand the problems of religion and the theories, which concern these problems. However, they are creating their theories and solving their problems in a methodologically heterogeneous atmosphere. Today, it appears that the history of science and learning does not belong anywhere within comparative religion.

The history of science and learning within comparative religion is a significant research area. However, a scholar of religion examining the past faces many difficulties and ambiguities in her work. The one problem concerns the methods used in a historical study. A scholar examining the past employs the methods of a historian. As a result, she considers her more a historian than a scholar of religion. The methodological support she receives is almost totally from 'other' fields. Furthermore, in an interdisciplinary methodological pressure she is in danger to lose her academic identity as a scholar of religion.

How are the methods of historical research integrated to comparative religion? Does it mean that a scholar of religion is, and has to be, at the same time, a competent historian? Obviously, a scholar of religion examining the past needs a redefined, innovative methodological solution/direction/position for her study. She has to know how to study the heritage of 'others' without being plunged herself among 'the host of others' within comparative religion. Here, the question of a method also concerns the complex role of the history of science and learning within comparative religion.

Distant Intimacy and Virtual Materiality: Developing flexible methodologies for the study of religious dress practices

Emma Tarlo, Goldsmiths

Standing on the border between the biological and social self, and caught up in local and transnational polemics concerning gender, identity, politics, fashion, religious interpretation and cultural affiliation, the dress of visibly Muslim women constitutes a complex and sensitive arena for research. The challenge lies in how to develop research methods which capture both the intimacy and emotional charge of individual clothing choices whilst at the same time recognising the complex web of cultural ideas and material possibilities in which these choices are formulated. This paper argues that in order to gain insights into the visual, material and ideological landscapes which inform new Muslim looks in Britain today, it is necessary to develop mixed methodologies which combine localised ethnographic studies of embodied practice with the analysis of public debates, media representations and internet sources. Whilst websites advertising Islamic goods, including fashion constitute a popular visual and material resource for young women, it is in the chat rooms, sisters forums, blogs and advice lines that we encounter intimate and transnational exchanges on issues of modesty, morality, fashion and faith. Here images and ideas are exchanged, intimate personal and familial dilemmas debated and new looks imagined into being, sometimes across continents. Whilst many scholars of religion might consider both dress and internet chat rooms as trivial and peripheral to religious practice, this paper argues that they are playing a significant and formative role in the building and sustaining of religious subjectivities.

Discourse Analysis and the re-contextualisation of biblical interpretation

Andrew Todd, Cardiff University and St. Michael's College, Llandaff

This paper grows out of an in-depth study of three Bible-study groups in East Anglia, in which transcripts were analysed using approaches drawn from Discourse Analysis. This approach re-contextualised previous understandings of the practice of biblical interpretation. This paper will demonstrate two ways in which this is the case.

First, the paper will show that attention paid to speech-exchange patterns in groups reveals the significance of conversational structure for an understanding of groups' interpretation of the Bible. For example, particular questions or prompts from group leaders project the possibility of kinds of response that are not necessarily dependent on the strategies for interpreting the text espoused by the leader/group.

Secondly, the paper will demonstrate how close attention to the interaction of different 'voices' in groups' discussion challenges the use of labels such as 'conservative' or 'liberal' to describe group members or the group as a whole. For example, 'voices' from contemporary society (relating to inclusiveness) are held in dialogue with more traditional 'voices' (relating to such matters as divine judgement), rather than being seen as in opposition to them.

The paper will argue, therefore, that Discourse Analysis throws considerable light on how groups achieve interpretation through their social interaction.

Researching global faith network: a framework for transcending conventional perspectives on international comparative research

Gill Valentine, University of Leeds
Robert Vanderbeck, University of Leeds
Kevin Ward, University of Leeds
Johan Andersson, University of Leeds
Joanna Sadgrove, University of Leeds

This paper draws on recent geographical theorisations of space to provide an innovative framework for researching global faith networks. Hantrais (1999) has argued that international comparative studies often fall into the trap of implicitly regarding countries as closed systems as they seek to explore the impact of processes in particular national contexts. In doing so, she suggests that they frequently emphasise either the commonality of experiences between different national case studies which are read as universal patterns that lose sight of the relevance of different spatial and temporal contexts; or they stress the specificity of each case study to such an extent that any sense of cross-national comparison is lost. Rarely do they recognise the complex webs of connections and relations across case study sites. Yet, global faith networks are interdependent such that transformations in attitudes and practices associated with one place may necessarily affect others. This paper therefore draws on a research project about the debate over the morality of homosexuality, the recognition of same-sex unions, and the ordination of LGBT people within the global Anglican/Episcopal communion to argue for a social topographical approach to studying global faith networks. This is an innovative framework for transcending conventional comparative perspectives developed in geography, to explore qualitatively some of the networks, and flows that connect places. The geographical term *topography* refers both to the detailed description of a particular location and the features that comprise the landscape itself. Physical geographers use contour lines to connect places at a uniform altitude to reveal the three-dimensional form of the terrain. In a similar way, the notion of social topographies links 'different places analytically in order to both develop the contours of common struggles and imagine a different kind of practical response to problems confronting them (Katz 2001: 722)'. Although this research project is organised at the national scale – focusing on case studies in UK, USA and South Africa -- we are also sensitive to both smaller and larger scale processes, as well as connections that are not capturable with conventional notions of scale (e.g. trans-national linkages between individual actors, parishes, localities, etc.). In this sense our paper argues for a methodological approach which captures the uniqueness of local situations while linking these situations to wider processes.

The methodological complexities of being a research and information centre

Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist, Inform, London School of Economics

Inform researches and provides information on new, alternative and minority religions using the methodology of the social sciences; its main aim being to take the results of its research out of the proverbial ivory tower and make it accessible to public and private institutions, other research centres, government bodies, and the general public whilst still maintaining academic rigour. This interaction with 'information seekers' also means information comes to Inform from enquirers - many want information or seek advice as a result of personal interaction with a religious group. Collecting data from a range of sources can get complicated in cases where information is scarce because groups are underground, when the law or state authorities become involved, when groups attempt to manipulate their public image - or all of the above.

Furthermore, staff at Inform have to navigate intricate confidentiality rules while also liaising with authorities, the media, and other 'cult watching groups', and deal with consequences when, occasionally, information is 'misused'. This paper will discuss some of the unique methodological and ethical dilemmas in light of recent cases with which Inform has been involved. More than simply explaining Inform's methodological choices in a challenging field, the paper hopes to open a discussion with other social scientists about these methodological choices and their practical applications.

When an image becomes sacred – photo elicitation with images of holy books

Anders Vassenden, International Research, Institute of Stavanger (IRIS)

The last decades' increase in the visual methods in social science has not been reflected in the study of religion. There is a rather perplexing absence of such methods in the study of religion, given the importance of visual symbolism in many religious traditions. This presentation is about photo elicitation among young Christians, Muslims and non-religious in the multicultural Grønland area in inner-city Oslo, Norway. We focus on two images of holy books: a Bible with a pair of aged hands folded on top, and a Qur'an with a prayer bead. Four narratives that these two images elicited form the basis of the discussion: (1) 'Everyday life sociologists of religion'; (2) 'Cousin Religion's holy book: tool for everyday cosmopolitanism'; (3) 'Translating holy books'; and (4) 'The image becomes sacred'. From these narratives, we discuss how photo elicitation can work in the study of religion. We outline which participants provided which narratives. We discuss the potential of images for tapping silent knowledge about different religious life-worlds, and for bridging different social and cultural worlds.

Challenging dominant representations of Islam online: innovative methods for studying YouTube.
Farida Vis, Loughborough University
Mike Thelwall, University of Wolverhampton
Liesbet van Zoonen, Loughborough University
Sabina Mihelj, Loughborough University

This paper highlights some of the methodological challenges for researching religion, specifically the representation of religion, on YouTube. Focusing on the current limits of the YouTube search engine and web interface, corpus selection, automated coding of metadata, downloading and archiving videos, it looks at the software currently available for such analysis.

The paper presents these innovative methods as part of a larger project that examines online responses to short anti-Islam film 'Fitna', released on the Internet by right-wing Dutch MP Geert Wilders in the spring of

2008. In it he predominantly relies on reproducing dominant media stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, and mostly amplifies these through the use of shocking imagery not normally shown in the mainstream media. Quickly following its release a global youth audience used YouTube to upload thousands of short videos in response to the controversial film. We have systematically selected 1413 of these videos, in part using a purpose built e-Research tool, developed as a result of an interdisciplinary collaboration. With the proliferation of online material available for analysis, the paper argues for the increased importance and necessity of such collaborative work with computer scientists in solving potential methodological obstacles in researching religion and new media.

"What Evidence and on Whose Terms ?
Researching Religion and Evidence-Based Policy-Making"

Paul Weller, University of Derby

Issues of religion have "returned" to the public sphere and thus to policy-making in a post Cold-War world in which it is claimed that the political ideologies of left and right have increasingly been replaced by a concern for more pragmatic management of the political economy, within which government policy development has sought rationales based upon "evidence-based policy making".

The relationship between scholarly expertise and research, advice to government, and the conduct of government are complex, and can sometimes become controversial - as in the so-called "Nutt affair" in which Professor David Nutt, the Chair of the Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs was dismissed by the Home Secretary after publishing a paper in which he questioned Government policy.

The "Religion and Society" programme aims include to: "provide insights of practical and policy relevance". Aspects of the sensitive relationship between research and scholarly activity in the study of religion, public debate and policy-making will be explored through the "Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality in England and Wales: Theory, Policy and Practice (2000-2010)" and the 1999-2001 "Religious Discrimination in England and Wales Research Project" that was commissioned and conducted under contract for the UK Government Home Office.

SUBMITTED PANELS

PANEL
Collaborative Research Methods in the Humanities: The Dissenting Academies Project 1660-1860

Simon Dixon is a Leverhulme funded Postdoctoral Research Fellow on the Dissenting Academies project at Queen Mary, University of London.

Rosemary Dixon and **Kyle Roberts** are AHRC-funded Postdoctoral Research Fellows for the Dissenting Academy Libraries Project at Queen Mary, University of London.

Richard Gartner is the Information and Knowledge Specialist at the Centre for e-Research, King's College, London. Previously he worked as a Research Assistant on the Surman Index project for Dr. Williams's Library.

Dmitri Iourinski is the AHRC-funded Technical Research Assistant for the Dissenting Academy Libraries Project at Queen Mary, University of London.

Isabel Rivers, PI for the Leverhulme and AHRC/ESRC projects, is a Research Professor at Queen Mary, University of London.

Dissenting academies were first established in England as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity, and were intended to provide Protestant students dissenting from the Church of England with a higher education similar to that available at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, from which dissenters were excluded. In the nineteenth century the academies' original purpose was largely superseded by the founding of London and the provincial universities, which were open to dissenters, and by the reform of Oxford and Cambridge. Two major new research projects – *A History of the Dissenting Academies in the British Isles, 1660-1860*, supported by the Leverhulme Trust, and *Dissenting Academy Libraries and their Readers, 1720-1860*, supported by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme – will transform our understanding of these institutions. The results will be a new multi-authored study of the dissenting academies, the online publication of the core empirical data in a series of supporting databases, and the creation of an innovative bibliographical database which will reconstruct the libraries of the principal academies. The projects are drawing on an international team of thirty-three scholars, including specialists in intellectual, social and religious history, theology, English literature, the history of science, economics and humanities computing.

This panel will begin with a brief introduction to the projects by **Isabel Rivers**. In the first paper, **Simon Dixon** will outline the research questions addressed by the academies project, describe the methodologies used to answer them and explain the importance of the interdisciplinary approach taken. He will introduce a series of databases that are a key part of these research methods. **Kyle Roberts** and **Rosemary Dixon** will explain the objectives of the libraries project. They will focus on the libraries database, which will not only provide scholars with a better understanding of the education of students at the academies, but will also be a crucial research tool for those concerned with the history of libraries and collecting, the publishing and retailing of books, and the history of reading. **Richard Gartner** and **Dmitri Iourinski** will speak about the technical aspects of the projects: Richard will discuss the recently-completed online conversion of the Charles Surman Index of Congregational Ministers; and Dmitri will describe the techniques he has developed to enable twenty-first-century professional library software to capture the organization and working of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century libraries.

PANEL
Conducting Qualitative Longitudinal Research in the Study of Religion

Chair: Abby Day, Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex, UK

How and why do religious beliefs, behaviours and belongings change over time?
That question animates public debate and underpins many related research questions in the academic study of religion, yet there is scant rich, informative, qualitative evidence to illuminate the issue. Papers here focus on the methodological challenges and opportunities involved in doing qualitative longitudinal research on religion. Projects range from single-researcher, ethnographic 'return to the field' studies to large-scale, long-term, follow-up projects.

Papers:

Academics going native or natives going academic? Glastonbury and the impact of qualitative longitudinal research in and on the field.

Marion Bowman, The Open University

One aspect of conducting Qualitative Longitudinal Research that traditionally has been anticipated and frowned upon is the 'danger' of the academic 'going native'. Of course, there are numerous assumptions underlying that attitude: that the academic was not a native at the start, that 'going native' necessarily compromises the soundness of the data and analysis, and so on. There are numerous counter-arguments, and examples of scholarship where 'going native' (temporarily or permanently) might be said to bring greater understanding of the phenomenon and depth of analysis. However, for many working in the field of contemporary religion, an equally pressing issue is that of our influence in and on the field of study through our presence, our questions and our writings. In the context of Qualitative Longitudinal Research can there be 'clear blue water' between us and the focus of research, or do we simply muddy the waters by our long-term presence? This paper explores some of these issues through the lens of long term ethnological study of Glastonbury.

Understanding *religion* means long-term living: Field research in Cuba

Jualynne E. Dodson and Shanti Ali Zaid
African Atlantic Research Team, Michigan State University

This is a proposal to present methodological findings of the African Atlantic Research Team (AART) from its interdisciplinary field research on religion in Oriente Cuba. The focus will be how AART adjusted to challenges presented by the field encounters and adjustments made from those opportunities. We have worked in Oriente for some nine years to develop and refine our techniques for collectively conducting cross-cultural interviews, observations, participations, and historical literature analysis. The conference presentation will discuss our philosophical and conceptual under-pinning, how we work, epistemological shift the experiences led us to make, as well as how all of these inform how we analyze our data.

AART is a mentoring collective of graduate, undergraduate, faculty, and community persons interested in historical and contemporary presences of African descendants in the Americas. Five members comprise our core and each has conducted research in Cuba. One result of the long-term collective investigation is the book Sacred Spaces and Religious Traditions of Oriente Cuba and one team member who participated in the research and production of the volume will make the conference presentation. Minimally, our

investigative work has involved culturally sensitive research, mixed methods, and the integration of historical techniques.

Belief over time in Yorkshire and beyond: three generations of believing in belonging

Abby Day, University of Sussex

How and why do religious beliefs, behaviours and belongings change over time?
That question animates public debate and underpins many related research questions in the academic study of religion, and yet there is scant rich, informative, qualitative evidence to illuminate the issue. Part of the problem is philosophical: is qualitative longitudinal research, at its epistemological and ontological core, unique? How does it differ from quantitative research? If we are to conduct longitudinal research by asking a series of set questions over time, as may occur in large-scale panel surveys or in semi-structured interviews, we risk reproducing the set of assumptions that may bedevil, rather than inform, current and future researchers. And yet, if we are to reinvent questions over time, we complicate potential for comparability and consistency.

Methodological innovation is clearly required. This paper describes my current research in Britain where I am returning to the field first encountered five years ago, reconnecting with people who were then aged between 14 and 83: 'A Longitudinal Qualitative Study of Belief and Identity' (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council), Co-Investigator Prof. Simon Coleman.

My original methodological innovation was to research belief without using religious vocabulary or selecting people based on their orientation to, or away from, religion. Now I am developing a unique ethnographic approach for researching belief and identity across time, avoiding the imposition of assumptions about, for example, religion, change, time or life course.

PANEL
Developments in Qualitative Research in the Psychology of Religion

Adrian Coyle, University of Surrey

Much research within the psychology of religion has been conducted within a positivist-empiricist framework, using orthodox designs and quantitative methods, partly due to the domain's need to establish 'scientific' credibility in light of historical tensions between religion and psychology. The growing acceptance of qualitative research in UK psychology offers some hope for greater methodological diversity, even if 'innovation' and 'radicalism' within a qualitative psychology of religion are relative terms when compared to other disciplines involved in the study of religion. This panel considers three instances of such 'relative radicalism' which point to future methodological possibilities within the psychology of religion.

Constituent Papers

Back to Methodological Basics: Qualitative Thematic Analysis in the Psychological Study of African Traditional Religion

Sahaya G. Selvam, Heythrop College, University of London, UK

In the time since qualitative psychological research has gained greater disciplinary acceptance, qualitative psychology has fragmented as a plethora of analytic approaches has developed, characterised by diverse

theoretical origins and epistemological stances. Recently a call was made to resist this process through the use of thematic analysis in qualitative psychological research. Researchers were encouraged to use common analytic procedures (with some flexibility) and locate these within whatever theoretical and epistemological bases best suited a particular study. This paper reviews this call to return to methodological basics in qualitative psychology and considers some benefits and challenges in using thematic analysis in research within the psychology of religion, drawing upon its use in a psychological study of African traditional religion. Located within the framework of positive psychology, the study aimed to explore whether core virtues and character strengths that are said to play a vital role in human well-being could be consistently discerned within anthropological data on African traditional religion. The researcher used a hybrid approach of deductive data analysis and inductive theme development. The paper reflects upon the research process and considers the potential utility of thematic analysis for the effective use of qualitative methods in the psychological study of religion.

Exploring the Value of Interpretative Pluralism in Qualitative Psychological Studies of Religious/Spiritual Issues: Principles and Practicalities

Adrian Coyle & Edith Steffen
Department of Psychology, University of Surrey, UK

Joanna Jackson
Pall Mall Mental Health Centre, Central and North West London NHS Trust, UK

Very recently, questions have been raised about what might be overlooked in psychological studies that adhere rigidly to one qualitative method. Consequently, the adoption of a pluralist interpretative stance has been advocated within qualitative psychology. This involves examining the same data through a range of analytic lenses to extract maximum 'analytic value'. This paper reflects upon the principles of interpretative pluralism and examines its practical value in qualitative psychological work on religious/spiritual issues, drawing upon two studies which used a pluralist stance. One study examined reports from people who claimed to have experienced the presence of someone who had died; it considered how these accounts might be understood. The other study focused on ethical and boundary issues in accounts of practice provided by counsellors who were employed within their churches to provide counselling services to other members of the congregation. Both studies interpreted accounts primarily in qualified phenomenological ways but, when adopting a social constructionist stance, they discerned consistent rhetorical business around the establishment of credibility and the deflection of non-desired versions of events. The paper considers how interpretative pluralism might be especially useful in psychological research on religion and spirituality, while noting further developmental work that is needed.

Psychology as a Methodological Resource in Reading Sacred Texts: Possibilities and Problems

Joanna Collicutt
Heythrop College, University of London

The use of psychology in the interpretation of sacred texts has a chequered history and has aroused objections both from psychologists and from scholars in Biblical studies and related domains. This paper examines the possibilities and problems associated with psychological readings of sacred texts. The possibilities are based on the contention that psychological approaches are non-literary in that they are interested in people (for example, characters in the text and readers/hearers across the text's history) and what texts can tell us about them, rather than primarily in texts as texts. Thus they can offer the possibility of fresh insights into the meanings and uses of sacred texts. Among the problems there is the question of the appropriateness of applying a twenty-first century Western psychology to texts that originated in and

concerned different historical and cultural contexts. At the level of interpretation, there is the question of what criteria can be used to determine the most appropriate psychological concepts and theories for analysing a given text. The paper advocates psychological readings of sacred texts as a form of qualitative research within the psychology of religion, while acknowledging that further developmental work is needed before this becomes standard.

PANEL
'Disciplining' the Study of Religion

Panel:
Cosimo Zene, SOAS, University of London
Sian Hawthorne, SOAS, University of London
Tullio Lobetti, SOAS, University of London
Paul-François Tremlett, Birkbeck College, University of London

Proposal:
What is the study of religion(s)? Is religion an object of a disciplinary gaze, or do religions constitute a field in which facts change under different forms of enquiry? As a discipline, the study of religion authorizes a specific theoretical and methodological apparatus, concrete career paths, institutional locations and funding opportunities. The disciplinary object and disciplinary intellectual are subject to the constraints of a normative gaze that structures what can be known, who is qualified to know and how what is known is to be disseminated, in advance. By contrast, as a field these certainties are cast into disarray. The study of religions loses disciplinary identity, throwing into doubt normative questions about what kinds of facts are being investigated, what kinds of theories and methods are legitimate in such an investigation and the vocation of the intellectual who no longer knows which game he or she is supposed to play. In this panel, we will subject to rigorous analysis the differing dimensions of these problems engaging with empirical materials from field research as a means of disclosing the field rather than the object of religion (Zene), the contradiction that interdisciplinarity poses to the field of the study of religion (Hawthorne), the advantages and disadvantages of the multi- or cross-disciplinary intellectual (Lobetti) and the vocation of the study of religions (Tremlett).

PANEL
Integrating Historical Research

John Wolffe (The Open University): Religious Conflict in Historical Perspective
This paper will first offer introductory comments on the panel as a whole, noting how it will explore not only the interface of the historical and contemporary study of the religion, but also the potentialities for knowledge exchange in work with Christian practitioners. The paper will then argue for the value of a *longue durée* historical perspective in understanding religious conflicts in the contemporary world. In particular the history of anti-Catholic movements will be examined both as a context for understanding residual issues in twenty-first century Northern Ireland and in the United States, and as a parallel for evaluating present-day Islamophobia.

Naomi Stanton (The Open University): From Sunday Schools to Christian Education
This case study combines archival research on the decline of the Sunday School movement since the early twentieth century with investigation of contemporary young people's engagement with organized Christianity. The analysis so far indicates that Sunday Schools in the 20th century were so rigidly institutionalised and had so many organisational needs to accommodate, that they no longer were able to focus on the self-identifiable needs of young people. Social capital building and maintaining flexibility appear to be important elements to be considered by those working with young people today.

John Maiden (The Open University): Building on History: the Church in London
This case study offers insights from *Building on History: the Church in London*, an AHRC-sponsored Knowledge Transfer project which integrates historians and their research with the contemporary practitioners, strategy and ministry of the Anglican Diocese of London. Offering examples from knowledge exchanges relating to historical and contemporaneous themes such as 'secularization' and church and congregation building, this paper describes the potentialities for this innovative method both to inform the outlook and policymaking of present-day religious institutions and stimulate and shape ongoing historical research.

W.M. Jacob (University of Wales Lampeter): Historical awareness and contemporary pastoral theology and theory
This presentation will investigate how studies of congregations might be informed by research about a congregation's past, and its changing socio-economic context, and of theories of pastoral ministry that have been practiced there in previous generations. It will be suggested that such research may prevent current practitioners and congregations from having unrealistic expectations about present approaches to pastoral ministry, and repeating mistakes that have been made in the past, This will be explored with particular reference to the conventional expectation that 'visiting' is an essential component in pastoral strategy in a parish or church.