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HANDBOOK OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Religion is a critical construct for understanding contemporary social life. It illuminates the everyday experiences and practices of many individuals; is a significant component of diverse institutional processes including politics, gender relations, and socioeconomic inequality; and plays a vital role in public culture and social change. This handbook showcases current research and thinking in the sociology of religion. The contributors, all active writers and researchers in the area, provide original chapters focusing on select aspects of their own engagement with the field. Aimed at students and scholars who want to know more about the sociology of religion, this handbook also provides a resource for sociologists in general by integrating broader questions of sociology (e.g., demography, ethnicity, life course, inequality, political sociology) into the analysis of religion. Broadly inclusive of traditional research topics (modernity, secularization, politics) as well as newer interests (feminism, spirituality, faith-based community action), this handbook illustrates the validity of diverse theoretical perspectives and research designs to understanding the multilayered nature of religion as a sociological phenomenon.

Michele Dillon is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire. She chaired the American Sociological Association's Section on Religion, 2002–3, and is book review editor for the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. In addition to numerous journal articles, Dillon is the author of *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power* (Cambridge, 1999) and *Debating Divorce: Moral Conflict in Ireland* (1993). She is currently writing on the life course patterns and implications of religiousness and spirituality.

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Contents

<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	xiii
Part One. Religion as a Field of Sociological Knowledge	
1 The Sociology of Religion in Late Modernity <i>Michele Dillon</i>	3
2 Studying Religion, Making it Sociological <i>Robert Wuthnow</i>	16
3 The Ritual Roots of Society and Culture <i>Robert N. Bellah</i>	31
4 Social Forms of Religion and Religions in Contemporary Global Society <i>Peter Beyer</i>	45
5 The Evolution of the Sociology of Religion: Theme and Variations <i>Grace Davie</i>	61
Part Two. Religion and Social Change	
6 Demographic Methods for the Sociology of Religion <i>Michael Hout</i>	79
7 Church Attendance in the United States <i>Mark Chaves and Laura Stephens</i>	85
8 The Dynamics of Religious Economies <i>Roger Finke and Rodney Stark</i>	96
9 Historicizing the Secularization Debate: An Agenda for Research <i>Philip S. Gorski</i>	110
10 Escaping the Procrustean Bed: A Critical Analysis of the Study of Religious Organizations, 1930–2001 <i>Patricia M. Y. Chang</i>	123
11 Religion and Spirituality: Toward an Integrated Analysis <i>Wade Clark Roof</i>	137

vi	Contents
Part Three. Religion and the Life Course	
12 Religious Socialization: Sources of Influence and Influences of Agency <i>Darren Sherkat</i>	151
13 In Rhetoric and Practice: Defining the “Good Family” in Local Congregations <i>Penny Edgell</i>	164
14 Religiousness and Spirituality: Trajectories and Vital Involvement in Late Adulthood <i>Michele Dillon and Paul Wink</i>	179
15 Religion and Health: Depressive Symptoms and Mortality as Case Studies <i>Michael McCullough and Timothy Smith</i>	190
Part Four. Religion and Social Identity	
16 Religious Identities and Religious Institutions <i>Nancy T. Ammerman</i>	207
17 Religion and the New Immigrants <i>Helen Rose Ebaugh</i>	225
18 A Journey of the “Straight Way” or the “Roundabout Path”: Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel <i>Arnold Dashefsky, Bernard Lazerwitz, and Ephraim Tabory</i>	240
19 Beyond the Synagogue Walls <i>Lynn Davidman</i>	261
20 Dis/location: Engaging Feminist Inquiry in the Sociology of Religion <i>Mary Jo Neitz</i>	276
Part Five. Religion, Political Behavior, and Public Culture	
21 Religion and Political Behavior <i>Jeff Manza and Nathan Wright</i>	297
22 Religious Social Movements in the Public Sphere: Organization, Ideology, and Activism <i>Rhys H. Williams</i>	315
23 Mapping the Moral Order: Depicting the Terrain of Religious Conflict and Change <i>Fred Kniss</i>	331
24 Civil Society and Civil Religion as Mutually Dependent <i>N. J. Demerath III</i>	348
25 Religion and Violence: Social Processes in Comparative Perspective <i>John R. Hall</i>	359
Part Six. Religion and Socioeconomic Inequality	
26 Religion, Faith-Based Community Organizing, and the Struggle for Justice <i>Richard Wood</i>	385
27 Latina Empowerment, Border Realities, and Faith-Based Organizations <i>Milagros Peña</i>	400

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0521806240 - Handbook of the Sociology of Religion
Edited by Michele Dillon
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents	vii
28 “Worldly” or “Other Worldly”? : Activism in an Urban Religious District <i>Omar McRoberts</i>	412
<i>References</i>	423
<i>Index</i>	471

List of Contributors

Nancy T. Ammerman
School of Theology and Department of
Sociology
Boston University
Boston, MA 02215

Robert N. Bellah
Department of Sociology
University of California-Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720
E-mail: yubin@socrates.berkeley.edu

Peter Beyer
Department of Classics and Religious
Studies
University of Ottawa
70 Laurier Avenue East
Ottawa
Canada K1N 6N5
E-mail: pbeyer@uottawa.ca

Patricia M. Y. Chang
Institute for the Study of Religion and
American Life
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
E-mail: changpc@bc.edu

Mark Chaves
Department of Sociology
University of Arizona
P.O. Box 210027
Tucson, AZ 85721-0027
E-mail: mchaves@u.arizona.edu

Arnold Dashefsky
Department of Sociology
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06269-2068
E-mail: dashef@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Lynn Davidman
Program in Judaic Studies
Brown University
Providence, RI 02904
E-mail: lynn_davidman@brown.edu

Grace Davie
Department of Sociology
University of Exeter
Exeter EX4 4RJ
England
E-mail: g.r.c.davie@exeter.ac.uk

N. J. Demerath III
Department of Sociology
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003
E-mail: demerath@soc.umass.edu

Michele Dillon
Department of Sociology
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH 03824
E-mail: michele.dillon@unh.edu

Helen Rose Ebaugh
Department of Sociology
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204-3474
E-mail: ebaugh@uh.edu

Penny Edgell

Department of Sociology
 University of Minnesota
 Minneapolis, MN 55455
 E-mail: edgell@umn.edu

Roger Finke

Department of Sociology
 Pennsylvania State University
 University Park, PA 16802-6207
 E-mail: rfinke@psu.edu

Philip S. Gorski

Department of Sociology
 University of Wisconsin
 Madison, WI 53706
 E-mail: pgorski@ssc.wisc.edu

John R. Hall

Department of Sociology
 University of California-Davis
 Davis, CA 95616
 E-mail: jrhall@ucdavis.edu

Michael Hout

Department of Sociology
 University of California-Berkeley
 Berkeley, CA 94720-5100
 E-mail: mikehout@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Fred Kniss

Department of Sociology and
 Anthropology
 Loyola University
 Chicago, IL 60626
 E-mail: fniss@wpo.it.luc.edu

Bernard Lazerwitz

Department of Sociology
 Bar Ilan University
 Ramat Gan
 Israel

Jeff Manza

Department of Sociology
 Northwestern University
 Evanston, IL 60208
 E-mail: manza@northwestern.edu

Michael McCullough

Department of Psychology
 University of Miami
 P.O. Box 248185
 Coral Gables, FL 33124-2070
 E-mail: mikem@miami.edu

Omar McRoberts

Department of Sociology
 University of Chicago
 Chicago, IL 60637
 E-mail: omcrober@uchicago.edu

Mary Jo Neitz

Department of Sociology
 University of Missouri
 Columbia, MO 65201
 E-mail: neitzm@missouri.edu

Milagros Peña

Department of Sociology
 University of Florida
 Gainesville, FL 32611-7330
 E-mail: mpeña@soc.ufl.edu

Wade Clark Roof

Department of Religion
 University of California-Santa Barbara
 Santa Barbara, CA 93106
 E-mail: wcroof@religion.ucsb.edu

Darren Sherkat

Department of Sociology
 Southern Illinois University
 Carbondale, IL 62901-4524
 E-mail: sherkat@siu.edu

Timothy Smith

Department of Psychology
 Brigham Young University
 Provo, UT 84602-5093
 E-mail: tim_smith@byu.edu

Rodney Stark

Department of Sociology
 University of Washington
 Seattle, WA 98195
 E-mail: socstark@aol.com

Laura Stephens

Department of Sociology
 University of Arizona
 P.O. Box 210027
 Tucson, AZ 85721-0027
 E-mail: lstephens@u.arizona.edu

Ephraim Tabory

Department of Sociology
 Bar Ilan University
 Ramat Gan 52900
 Israel
 E-mail: tabore@mail.biu.ac.il

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Contributors

xi

Rhys H. Williams

Department of Sociology
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0378
E-mail: williary@ucemail.uc.edu

Paul Wink

Department of Psychology
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02481
E-mail: pwink@wellesley.edu

Richard Wood

Department of Sociology
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1166
E-mail: rlwood@unm.edu

Nathan Wright

Department of Sociology
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL 60208
E-mail: n-wright@northwestern.edu

Robert Wuthnow

Department of Sociology
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544-1010
E-mail: wuthnow@princeton.edu

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