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EDITORIAL

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Welcome to volume 8 of *FIR*. Volume 8.1 has a slightly feminist feel to its contributions, or at least the articles are written by female scholars and are about women's experiences of religion. There is also an international feel as the research was carried out in South Africa, India, Zimbabwe, Canada and the UK. Although the dominant discipline represented remains the Study of Religion, both humanities and social sciences intermingle to produce the interdisciplinary range of the contemporary study of religious phenomena and both etic and emic points of view are demonstrated. Kate Power's article *Investigating Religious "Identity": The Promise and Problem of Discourse Analytic Methods for Religious Studies Inquiries* opens the collection. Kate's interest in Applied Linguistics provides a case study which integrates the study of religion with discourse analytic methods, to examine how contemporary Christian identities are represented in conversation. Based on interviews and focus groups with 46 residents of a small town in rural Canada, the research is primarily concerned with religious *talk* and reviews briefly how "identity" is conceptualized in contemporary discourse analysis studies, before describing both the challenge of selecting appropriate linguistic methods for the investigation of religious identity, and the impact upon her research of adopting particular methods. Nina Hoel's contribution entitled *Embodying the Field: A Researcher's Reflections on Power Dynamics, Positionality and the Nature of Research Relationships* shifts the terrain to South Africa and focuses on the various ways in which research relationships evolve and are

negotiated by paying particular attention to the *embodied nature* of ethnographic research. She draws upon her own research experience of interviewing South African Muslim women about sexual dynamics, and engages critically with debates concerning power dynamics in research relationships as well as researcher positionality. She argues that researchers should pay increasing attention to the multiple ways in which *doing* research always is an embodied practice.

After these two important contributions to fieldwork methodology there are three empirical studies. The first two throw light on the Brahmakumaris in India and female Pentecostal Leaders in Zimbabwe. Samta Pandya's *The "Social" Face of the Brahmakumaris in India: Contemporary Perspectives and Praxis Nuances* analyses the Brahmakumari movement in India with a focus on its mix of millenarianism, simultaneous accommodation-assimilation and subtle exclusivity. Charisma, genesis and cultural geographies, the contemporary perspectives and visions on society, stratification, ethics and transformation are discussed along with a critique of the epistemological hybrid. New thematic and methodological insights gained from fieldwork are provided in the article. Tapiwa Mapuranga's *Bargaining with Patriarchy? Women Pentecostal Leaders in Zimbabwe* explores the contested status of women leaders within the context of women's notable rise to influential leadership within the Pentecostal movement in Zimbabwe. Noting that these women Pentecostal leaders tend to be married to charismatic founders of Pentecostal ministries, the study interrogates their status within the Pentecostal movement.

The final article was researched by Hannah Bacon and is entitled *Sin or Slim? Christian Morality and the Politics of Personal Choice in a Secular Commercial Weight Loss Setting*. Hannah argues that religion provides an important source of moral judgment for female slimmers even in secular environments. The article draws on her qualitative research inside a UK secular, commercial slimming group to consider how the Christian moral language of sin functions within this setting to construct a politics of choice that holds the dieter personally responsible for her fat.

I hope that you enjoy reading the articles that comprise volume 8.1 of *FIR*.

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Editor