
Ron Geaves

Editorial

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Our submissions in volume 7 issue 1 consist primarily of fieldwork undertaken in various parts of the United Kingdom and reflect the undoubted strength of the empirical study of religion in British universities. The study of religion increasingly becomes multi-disciplinary when it is concerned with field studies and these four articles in this edition represent sociology, psychological anthropology, law, leisure studies, education and religious studies and in two submissions highlight the creative collaboration of scholars of diverse disciplines. Two of the studies are concerned with youth and childhood studies.

In the first article, “Tartan Buddhists: A Typology for Understanding Participation in a Tibetan Buddhist Organization in Scotland,” John McKenzie of the University of Aberdeen provides a sociological typology to analyse the different types of practitioners within the Tibetan Buddhist organization, Rokpa International, based in Scotland. He argues that the empirically derived criteria and Weber’s sociological concepts of authority, power and status allow us to understand the tensions and mutually dependent relationship between the different types of followers. The author concludes that, whilst this typology is not presented as a challenge to existing typologies, the article demonstrates the potential use of these sociological concepts for understanding the practice and development of Buddhism in the West.

Katherine King is a Lecturer in Leisure Studies in the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University and joins with Peter Hemming, a lecturer in Sociology of

Education at Cardiff University, to offer “Exploring Multiple Religious Identities through Mixed Qualitative Methods.” The paper reflects on the relationship between research subjects and methodology and offers a reflexive account of the process of researching young people’s religious identities. Drawing upon three participant case studies it explores the public private spectrum produced as part of discussion groups, semi-structured interviews and an innovative online e-Journal research activity to consider how combining research methods may enable young people to explore their own identities in diverse ways. It was found that as the participants in the project moved through each stage of the research process, the way in which they represented their religious identity shifted as they met differing social environments and became more practised at telling their own life stories, or evolved their own perspectives over time. The writers conclude that employing mixed methods contributes a more nuanced understanding of the role of religion in young people’s lives yet also raises significant ethical implications surrounding participant confidentiality in research participation.

The third article is also concerned with young people’s religiosity. A research team from Cardiff University brings together scholars from the school of law, religious studies and social sciences to produce “Reflections on Qualitative Research with Muslim Families.” Asma Khan, Jonathan Scourfield, Sophie Gilliat-Ray and Sameh Otri persuade us that detailed accounts of fieldwork relationships can be helpful reading for those embarking on research with a similar population. The article presents reflections on the process of conducting qualitative research with 60 Muslim families. The main research aim was to describe and explain how children (aged 12 and under) are brought up to be Muslims and the article offers detailed reflections about four main aspects of the research process: research team members’ identities and the implications of these, the recruitment of families to take part in the research, the conduct of fieldwork (interviews and observation) and the use of child-friendly techniques, such as interviews with young children, oral diaries and photo elicitation.

The final contribution in this edition is more theoretical than methodological. Arthur Buehler, of Victoria University in New Zealand, furthers our understanding of Durkheim’s notion of collective effervescence. The author argues that although Durkheim located the phenomenon as the source of religious vitality, if not the source of religion itself, he also argued that collective forces/sentiments are measurable and can be investigated scientifically. Despite this, it is claimed that collective effervescence has been almost entirely neglected by scholars. This paper argues that the scientific investigation of collective effervescence requires anthropologists and other scholars to go beyond their current practices of armchair scholarship. Such a move engenders an epistemic pluralist methodology that

includes the firsthand subjective and inter-subjective data of lived experience rather than relying solely on conceptual knowledge acquired through text-like verbal utterances. The article is entitled “The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence: Expanding the Context of Fieldwork.”

The next edition of *Fieldwork in Religion* (7.2) is guest edited by Professor Andrew Yip on the topic of researching Religion/Spirituality and Sexuality and will consist of six articles.