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Editorial

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In this first issue of Volume 5 *Fieldwork in Religion* (*FIR*) celebrates five years of existence. For a new journal in the study of religion five years seems to be significant. It demonstrates the level of commitment by all those involved in the editorial process and provides an opportunity for the editors to show their appreciation for all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes and to thank all our contributors for their confidence in the journal when they decide to make it a home for their completed research. The next significant date will be our tenth anniversary and somehow that milestone would indicate a level of establishment and longevity and *FIR* will not be any longer a new journal of religion but will have joined its longer-lived competitors. However, in order to achieve our goals for the next five years we rely on you to continue to send us your high quality contributions.

In this issue we have five articles of such quality. Eleanor Nesbitt and Elizabeth Arweck document and discuss issues arising from an ethnographic study of the religious identity formation of young people growing up in mixed-faith families. They report and reflect on challenges to the design of the project, possible explanations for these challenges and the ways in which the project team addressed them. They describe the difficulties encountered, especially those which arose from the combination of traditional ethnography with cyber-ethnography and, secondly, to sampling, interviewing and participant observation. These concerns with method and the ethical aspects of ethnography are significant for future empirical studies of families, especially those with particular focus on religion, culture and identity.

Louise Müller provides the first of our in-depth case studies. In an historical-empirical study, she focuses on the use of Indigenous Religion as a strategy for the construction of group identity among the Akuapem in Eastern Ghana. She studied historical archives in Kumasi and combined it with empirical fieldwork among the Akuapem and the Ashanti in 2005, analysing (self-made) video images of the annual indigenous religious festivals of these tribal groups and collecting in-depth interviews from the Ashanti and the Akuapem people. She concludes that Indigenous Religion should not be omitted in the construction of group identities by the social sciences.

Frans Jespers returns our attention to the study of contemporary religions in Western Europe. He explores the phenomenon of "paranormal fairs" or "psychic fairs" In the Netherlands over the past twenty-five years. Challenging sociological analyses that define such fairs to be no more than commercialized New Age practices, he argues that distinct differences can be identified between the activities found in the fairs and "typical" New Age behaviour. Noting that the majority who attend the fairs belong to the lower working class and are female, he concludes that the paranormal fairs represent a special form of "the spiritual revolution" (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), in which a segment of the New Age is taken over by traditional folk religion.

Marta Trzebiatowska keeps our attention in Europe but returns the focus to methodological issues in fieldwork. Her article addresses the issues of reflexivity and emotional strain on fieldworkers that share aspects of identity with the religious populations under investigation. Based on two research projects with Polish nuns and Polish Catholic migrants, she explores the role of reflexivity in dealing with the emotional stress of fieldwork. Drawing upon the lessons of feminist methodology which have made fieldwork a collaborative and equal relationship between the researcher and the participants, she concludes that when objective conditions in the field collide with the researcher's cultural biography and dispositions, exercising reflexivity may not be sufficient to fix the problem.

In the final contribution, Martin Wood adds to the growing body of literature which argues that many scholars of Hindu traditions in the diaspora have privileged what are certain "representative" versions of Hinduism over "vernacular" traditions. His paper examines the phenomenon of *najar*, the evil eye, in relation to beliefs and practices concerning food among Gujarati Hindus in the United Kingdom and New Zealand and the tensions exhibited by competing elements of the diaspora populations with regard to beliefs in the evil eye. Wood argues that concepts and notions concerning *najar* are inextricably linked to food but also highlight wider considerations of belief and practice which underpin belief or disbelief in *najar* and

which allow the researcher to penetrate questions of authority among Gujarati Hindu diasporas.

In the editor's view this edition of *FIR* has a good balance between case studies from around the globe, but also provides very valuable insights into the challenges presented by the ethnographic study of religion.