



Connecting for Change: emerging research
and policy on religion and belief in the public
sphere

**British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group (SocRel) Annual
Response Day**

www.socrel.org.uk

Friday 21st October 2016 10am - 4 pm

Venue: BSA Offices, Imperial Warf, Townmead Road, Fulham SW6 2PY

Welcome

The public sphere has been both prominent and turbulent in recent times, and in common with other interests and disciplines, the study of religion and belief has been exploring the questions which are raised. From the role of faith in public life, to media representations, legal cases and controversies, and the future of school RE, a plethora of research and reports has been underway which connect religion and belief with policy and practice. This event will present key examples, with *an emphasis on sociology of religion, including as it connects with other disciplines, and with policy and practice.*

Programme Overview

9.45	Registration
10.00	Welcome – Professor Adam Dinham
10.05	Keynote – Professor Tariq Modood
10.50	Coffee
11.00	Erica Howard Offending religious feelings? Political rhetoric, freedom of expression and religious hate speech
11.40	Sandra Maurer Beyond institutional walls: Minority Faith Networks on Campus
12.20	Céline Benoit Re-imagining religion: the case of Birmingham
13.00	Lunch
13.20	Katie Gaddini Between Church and State: A Comparative Case Study of Politics & Religion
14.00	Andrew Orton “Connecting for Change in Christian Responses to Tackling Debt (and Related Research)”
14.40	Coffee
14.45	Hazel Bryan and Lynn Revell Liquid professionalism in an age of extremism; the compromise of religion and beliefs in the public sphere
15.25	Jo Bryant Brokering Faith: Healthcare Chaplains as Gatekeepers of Religion (and Belief) in the National Health Service
16.00	End



Equality for Secular Belief and Minority Faiths? Reflections on the Commission on Religion in British Public Life

Keynote Speaker: Professor Tariq Modood
(University of Bristol)

One of the challenges today in relation to the place of religion in British public life is how to balance the considerations of secular belief and minority faiths at a time when they are showing a certain vitality, with that of a declining Christian heritage. I consider this topic in relation to the recent report of the Commission on Religion in British Public Life (2015). My interest is less on the specific policy recommendations of the Commission, more on the general approach or understanding of the context exhibited in relation to the place of religion in a changing Britain, with specific reference to an egalitarian inclusivity in relation to secular belief and minority faiths.

Tariq Modood is Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy and the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol and the co-founder of the international journal, *Ethnicities*. He was awarded a MBE for services to social sciences and ethnic relations in 2001 and was elected a member of the Academy of Social Sciences (UK) in 2004. He served on the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, the National Equality Panel, and the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life. His latest books include *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2nd ed; 2013); and as co-editor *Multiculturalism Rethought* (2015) and *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines* (2016).

Offending religious feelings? Political rhetoric, freedom of expression and religious hate speech Erica Howard (Middlesex University)

In many European countries, anti-Muslim rhetoric has become part of the political and public debate and is used by far right as well as mainstream politicians and others. In the UK (and elsewhere), the language is mixed up with anti-immigrant discourse. But what can be done about such rhetoric? Should we enact (religious) hate speech laws against politicians who use this type of language? What about the right to freedom of speech, does this not apply in this case?

Freedom of expression applies, according to established human rights case law, not only to expressions that are favourably received but also to those that offend, shock or disturb. The right includes criticising beliefs and those who manifest their beliefs cannot expect to be exempt from all criticism. On the other hand, the right to freedom of expression brings with it duties and responsibilities, and this includes a duty to avoid expressions which are gratuitously offensive to others and which do not contribute to any form of public debate.

In this presentation, I argue that hate speech laws are not the right way to tackle political rhetoric against Muslims, migrants and other groups. This is based on

the importance of freedom of speech for open and public debate in a democratic society and the major role (opposition) politicians play in this debate.

Erica Howard is associate professor in law at Middlesex University, London. Her current research areas include religious discrimination, freedom of religion and its intersection with other rights, including freedom of expression and the right not to be discriminated against on the ground of sexual orientation. Web page: <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-directory/howard-erica>

Beyond institutional walls: Minority Faith Networks on Campus

Sandra Maurer (Goldsmiths)

The increasing number of religiously diverse student bodies and on-going public scrutiny of our campuses pose new opportunities to the HE landscape. At the centre, we find young adults who are often coming to terms with their own religiosity for the first time. To date there is a body of important research on certain aspects of religious campus activity, especially on student satisfaction, worship facility provision and (multi-faith) chaplaincy. However, less is known about so-called religious or faith societies; small groups of students forming an alliance often based on religious education, worship and volunteering. Although often small in numbers (10 to 35), through my multi-sited ethnographical study with young Hindu, Muslim and Sikh societies investigating oral tradition of sacred texts, I discovered much wider networks connecting these societies through different institutions and thereby multiplying the number of participants.

In this paper I show that rather than societies being a form of isolated student activism merely engaging with the various structures of HE (e.g. chaplains, Student Union and Equality and Diversity officers), certain political and/or cultural groups such as FOSIS, NHSF and Basics of Sikhi exercise influence over the societies through umbrella networks; financial support and training. With their help religious societies respond to little ‘top down’ engagement (Dinham and Jones 2012, see also Catto 2013, Kara 2012) by promoting highly specific notions of religiosity, potentially beyond its student membership. As their numbers grow, they, too, will shape the public sphere through their notion of self-proclaimed wider representation of religious youth.

Sandra Maurer is a third year AHRC funded doctoral student in the sociology department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Re-imagining religion: the case of Birmingham

Céline Benoit (Aston University)

In this paper, I will focus on the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus (BAS) for Religious Education (RE), and its implementation in primary schools. The policy was drafted by Marius Felderhof, who condemns the national Framework for RE for being “seriously flawed,” partly because RE has become conflated with Religious Studies (RS) and phenomenology, and has abandoned theology altogether. He suggests that contemporary RE, with its focus on learning *about*

religion, lacks “moral and attitudinal dispositions.” As religions are treated substantively, Felderholf states that RE has come a “spectatorial exercise,” and reproduces secularist attitudes to religion.

The teaching of RE in the BAS is centred on 24 ‘dispositions’ (or values), instead of the traditional six word religions. Barnes (2011) praises the policy for its innovative pedagogy, and for re-orienting RE towards morality. He argues that with the BAS, RE can move away from phenomenology; which is in his opinion another form of confessionalism. Indeed, since phenomenology assumes that every religion’s claim to truth is equally valid, and constructs different religious traditions as variables of one common expression of the Sacred and a universal theology, Barnes argues that phenomenology serves to promote Liberal Protestant ideologies.

Conversely, I argue that the BAS is as “flawed” as the national Framework. As I critically examine the policy, I argue that religion in the BAS is also constructed along Liberal Protestant lines. Furthermore, as I reflect on data collected throughout 2014-15 in a primary school, I demonstrate that the BAS is also guilty of reproducing secularist attitudes towards religions.

Céline Benoit is a PhD student in Sociology at Aston University. She is looking at how religion is constructed through daily educational discourses, and how religious communities are represented. She has collected data in a primary school in Birmingham throughout 2014-15 and will present findings from her observations and interviews.

Between Church and State: A Comparative Case Study of Politics & Religion

Katie Gaddini (University of Cambridge)

Evangelical Christianity is not only the largest religious entity in the United States comprising between 30-35% of the population, but also the most politically powerful due to it’s influence on policies and dominant ideologies, as well as it’s ability to establish key political alliances. Evangelicalism assumes a similar cultural form in the UK, however key distinctions such as the presence of an established church body with official status prohibit the religious-political entwinement that occurs in the US. This paper compares how two similar evangelical communities respond differently to significant political events: the election of Donald Trump as the GOP candidate in the US, and the EU referendum in the UK.

Based on fieldwork carried out at two prominent evangelical churches, one in Sacramento, California and the other in central London, this paper investigates how location matters in how individuals view politics, the role of Christianity in intervening with public policy, and the importance of uncovering the growing network of evangelical Christians globally. In addition to analysing the church leadership’s framing of these concurrent political events, I explore how individual members – women in particular – conceptualise the relationship between evangelicalism, political ideology, and public policies. By observing

the differences between the US and UK evangelical-political relationship I suggest that even in formally secular states, the division between the religious and the secular is rife with contestation.

Katie Gaddini is a third year PhD student in the department of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. She holds an MSc from the London School of Economics and a Master's of Social Work from Boston College. Her work focuses on the sociology of religion, gender, and politics.

“Connecting for Change in Christian Responses to Tackling Debt (and Related Research)”

Andrew Orton (Durham University)

This presentation reflects on the experience of conducting participatory research combining sociology of religion and practical theological approaches into social action by Christians in response to debt. In a context where issues relating to finance and debt have a huge impact on local communities, it will explore how Christian responses are engaging in different ways with others to respond. These different responses range from developing various types of support for affected individuals to organising which seeks to tackle perceived causes through collective action and political campaigns. Increasingly, these responses are involving forms of community development which connect and support different local responses across diverse groups within communities, whilst joining these up to form wider strategic responses through developing networks. The presentation will reflect on the complexity of the partnerships and networks of relationships with others involved in this work, whether those they relate to in it share their (particular interpretation of the) Christian faith or not. At the same time, it will explore how innovative forms of participatory research can generate original findings whilst becoming involved in the dynamics of change for those involved, and the opportunities, issues and challenges this presents for researchers in this field.

Dr Andrew Orton is Senior Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University, where he researches faith-related social action in policy and practice. He is a founder member of the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, including delivering training on ‘Developing policy and practice through participatory research’.

Liquid professionalism in an age of extremism; the compromise of religion and beliefs in the public sphere.

Hazel Bryan (University of Gloucestershire and Lynn Revell (Canterbury Christ Church University)

Context

Recent policy on Counter terrorism and the requirement to ‘not undermine British values’ (2012 Teachers’ Standards) disrupts the boundaries of the public

sphere in educational settings. The policy requires teachers to promote fundamental British values *inside and outside of school*, thereby situating the teacher in a qualitatively new relationship with the state.

Methodology

This research analyses data from 60 school leaders and teachers. It explores the way educators interpret counter terrorist policy and situate themselves in relation to professionalism.

Theoretical Framework

We use Bauman's notion of liquid modernity to problematize emerging patterns of professionalism that fracture traditional understandings of the role of religion and belief in the public sphere.

Findings

The contract between the teacher as professional and the state is redrawn. Whilst the teacher is reasonably answerable to the state whilst practising within the public sphere, this new legislation determines what professionals are required to promote in the private sphere.

By virtue of the fact that you are a qualified teacher your status as a private citizen is now compromised: this new legislation interrupts the contract between the individual in the private sphere and the professional in the public domain.

The private religious and political beliefs of teachers are no longer legitimate because of the changing nature of the public sphere. The state, through this legislation, legitimises certain forms of values and beliefs.

Professor Hazel Bryan is strategic lead for research in the School of Education, University of Gloucestershire. Her research focuses upon education policy and education values.

Dr Lynn Revell is a Reader in Education and Religion at Canterbury Christ Church University. Her research focuses on Islam, values and extremism in education.

Brokering Faith: Healthcare Chaplains as Gatekeepers of Religion (and Belief) in the National Health Service

Jo Bryant (Cardiff University)

The relationship between religion and health is well established, with hospital chaplains retaining their niche throughout the history of healthcare provision in England. The nature and role of chaplaincy reflects the changing relationship between religion and health, from the chaplain as moral guardian and "technologist of the soul" to chaplain as non-judgemental pastoral carer (Woodward 1999; Swift 2014). In particular, the founding of the NHS instituted a massive shift towards a secularised state-run health service autonomous from church influence. The NHS can now dictate the terms of religious involvement in healthcare, with chaplaincy acting as chief negotiator. While some literature

has begun to examine how secular agendas influence chaplaincy (Todd 2015; Pattison 2015), there has been little examination of how chaplaincy exerts influence on the place of religion and belief in the NHS. Whether it's mediating a dispute over the *kara* (bangle) being worn by Sikh staff or selecting appropriate chaplaincy volunteers, chaplains must traverse the boundaries between providing religious, spiritual and pastoral support for patients, visitors and staff and the secular legislative and ideological agendas of the NHS. This paper, emerging out of data collected over the past year, begins to examine the ways in which religion is negotiated, mediated and branded in a healthcare setting, with particular reference to equality and diversity, safeguarding, and infection control.

Jo Bryant is a third year AHRC funded doctoral student in the Department of Religious and Theological Studies at Cardiff University. Her research focuses on the integration of minority faith groups in healthcare chaplaincy.

