

May 2026

Issue 31

ISA
RC22

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The ISA RC22 Sociology of
Religion's official newsletter

Highlights of the Month

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Call for papers

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Welcome to a new issue of the RC22 Sociology of Religion Newsletter.

To all RC22 Members,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to a new issue of the RC22 Sociology of Religion Newsletter. As we continue our collective work, this edition offers an opportunity to reflect on recent activities, ongoing collaborations, and the conversations that continue to shape our field across diverse contexts.

In this issue, we look back at the RC22 Midterm Conference, Global Flows and Reconfigurations of the Sacred, where scholars from around the world came together to share insights, engage in dialogue, and explore the shifting landscapes of religion and spirituality. The richness of these exchanges speaks to the strength and diversity of our community, as well as to the relevance of our work in understanding contemporary social transformations.

Your engagement remains at the heart of RC22. Whether through your research contributions, participation in conferences, or continued involvement in our shared spaces, you help sustain a dynamic and interconnected network dedicated to advancing the sociology of religion. We are grateful for your presence and for the perspectives you bring into this collective endeavor.

As we move forward, we look ahead to new opportunities for collaboration, exchange, and intellectual growth. We encourage you to stay connected, share your work, and continue contributing to the vitality of RC22.

Thank you for being part of this community. We are delighted to share this new issue with you.

Warm regards,

Daniel Valdez Márquez
Online Communication Manager
ISA RC22 Sociology of Religion

Launching the RC22 Sociology of Religion Mailing List



To all RC22 Members,

We are pleased to announce the creation of a new mailing list for the RC22 Sociology of Religion community, hosted through Google Groups.

The aim of this mailing list is to strengthen communication among scholars working in the sociology of religion and related fields, and to give greater visibility to events, activities, calls for papers, conferences, workshops, publications, and other relevant initiatives.

The list is intended as a shared space where members of the RC22 community can circulate information and contribute to making the field more dynamic and connected internationally. Messages sent to the list will be moderated to ensure that the content remains relevant and useful for the community.

In the coming weeks, we will gradually add RC22 members to the mailing list. In the meantime, if you would like to subscribe directly, please complete the form by clicking the link below or scanning the QR code:

[RC22 Sociology of Religion Mailing List](#)

We warmly encourage you to join the list and to use it as a channel for sharing information of interest to colleagues in the sociology of religion and related areas.

We hope this new communication channel will help foster exchange, collaboration, and visibility within the international sociology of religion community.



Moments, Dialogues, and Insights from the RC22 Midterm Conference

The International Sociological Association's (ISA) Research Committee on Sociology of Religion - RC 22, and the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University (SAU), jointly organized the ISA RC 22 Mid-term conference, on Global Flows and Reconfigurations of the Sacred, from the 5th to the 7th of February, 2026, at the South Asian University, New Delhi. 125 delegates from 25 countries across 5 continents presented papers in the offline mode in 17 thematic sessions revolving round the "sacred".

The conference was inaugurated by Professor Mar Grier, President, ISA RC-22, Professor K. K. Aggarwal, President, South Asian University, Professor Irene Becci, President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR), and Dr. Sumedha Dutta, Conference Convenor, and Board Member, ISA RC 22, among other dignitaries. Highlighting the significance of hosting this seminal conference in India, the Chief Guest,

Prof. Mar Grier, observed that India offers a powerful lens through which to think about religious complexity today, through the coexistence of long-standing traditions and contemporary innovations, the entanglement of spirituality, politics, economy, and culture, and the many ways in which religion is lived, negotiated...



Sumedha Dutta

...and transformed in everyday life. Professor K.K. Aggarwal underlined South Asian University's commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and international collaborations, while emphasizing the role of sociological inquiry in addressing ethical, moral and global challenges.

Professor Becci introduced the ISSR to the delegates, and spoke about its next conference, scheduled to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2027. Delving into the year long journey that culminated in the organization of the conference, Dr. Dutta unveiled the book of abstracts comprising of hundreds of riveting abstracts compiled under different thematic sessions. She highlighted the regional diversity of the participants, who hailed from countries such as Germany, Norway, Mexico, Poland, Ireland, Spain, Iran, Switzerland, Kenya, Portugal, USA, Israel, Italy, Mongolia, Finland, Russia, Austria, Australia, France, Chile, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, apart from almost all the states of India, in this seminal event. Later, the dignitaries inaugurated a fascinating exhibition on "The Hindu Diaspora in Mexico", which was compiled by Dr. Lucero Lopez, Indologist from CRIM-UNAM, Mexico. The inaugural session was also addressed by Dr. Dev Nath Pathak, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, SAU and Dr. Ravinder Soni, Registrar, SAU, and attended by Professor Susan Visvanathan, Professor Renuka Singh, former Professors from CSSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, among other dignitaries and delegates from across the world



Two keynote lectures were organized as part of the conference. On Day 1 of the conference, Prof. Susan Visvanathan delivered the first Keynote Address on “Imagination and Experience: Evaluating Religion & Its Goals”, which was discussed by Professor Avi Astor, from Autonomous University of Barcelona, and chaired by Professor Mar Griera. Her talk reflected on the theme of sociological imagination and how experiences of faith connect with broader social, cultural, and structural transformations. Prof. Mar Griera’s Keynote on Day 2 of the conference, entitled “Governing, Believing, and Healing Spiritually, Authority, and the Body in Contemporary Western Society” explored how spirituality is not merely a private choice but is also institutionally embedded. The talk was discussed by Prof. Marian Burchardt from University of Leipzig, and chaired by Dr. Sumedha Dutta.

The plenary session, “Religion in South Asia” on Day 3 of the conference particularly discussed the various forms religions continue to take within South Asia. It had an interesting line up of speakers from India, Bangladesh and Nepal, who spoke on issues ranging from religion and child rights, to Buddhism in South Asia. The valedictory session was graced by the senior Vice President of SAU, Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi, along with the Proctor, Professor Kapil Sharma, in which organizers and delegates shared their thoughts on the conference. Other distinguished dignitaries who attended the conference included Professor Ari Engelberg from Israel, Board Member, ISA RC 22, Professor David Tittensor from University of Melbourne, Australia, Professor Ingrid Loland from University of Stavanger, Norway, Professor Arniika Kuusisto, from University of Helsinki, Finland, Professor Musa Yusupov from Chechen State University, Russia and Dr. Michal Erlich, from O.P. Jindal Global University, India. The conference formally ended with the vote of thanks by the convenor, Dr. Dutta.



A Presidential Dinner was organized for the delegates on day 2, along with a gala cultural programme by the students of the university, who showcased the regional diversity of South Asia, which was greatly appreciated by the delegates as they were left mesmerized by the energy, talent and enthusiasm of the students. It is noteworthy that registration fee waivers were given to almost 50 professional academics and research scholars, and access to the conference was provided free of cost to almost 100 young participants. On February 8th, an excursion to Agra was organized for the international delegates, to witness the grandeur of the majestic Taj Mahal – a visit that was coordinated by Dr. Dutta, along with the district administration of Agra. This well-organized mid-term conference was partially funded by the ISA, the SAU, along with a benevolent sponsor, and was supported by the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, India. The event was greatly appreciated by all the delegates for the quality and rigor of the presentations and discussions, the grandeur of the venue and cultural program, the hospitality they experienced, especially from the young, committed volunteers from across institutions and disciplines, the professional and emotional bonds that this event helped generate, and of course, for the sumptuous food, which was being prepared by a Michelin chef!



'NAVIGATING POWER, VULNERABILITY, AND EMOTIONAL LABOR IN THE MIDWEST: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS POSSIBILITY AND LIMIT

Rebecca Catto

My institution, Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, is a public university with a progressive reputation in a majority Republican part of the Midwest. This reputation is not lost due to the events of May 4, 1970, when National Guard soldiers shot, killed, and injured students on campus during a protest against the Vietnam War and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. These events caused national and international outcry and are regarded as having contributed to the end of Richard Nixon's presidency. The social conflict and political divisions then are reminiscent of those alive on the campus today.

The state of Ohio has shifted in the past two decades from being a battleground to a majority Republican state. In 2025 the state legislature enacted legislation closely regulating and monitoring teaching and assessment content and faculty at Ohio public universities and amending their governance. The act also restricts Ohio public higher education institutions' use or endorsement of a "controversial belief or policy." This is defined as "any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion" (Ohio Legislature 2025:11).

This essay draws on my experiences as a sociologist of religion conducting focus groups (run between 2021 and 2023) discussing science, identity, and values with a mix of local residents (mostly White and Christian). I reflect on my positionality, assumptions, and their responses in a context directly and rapidly impacted by broader social and political changes.



While I do not come from a background of research on the right, given the demographics of Ohio, engaging with the right is essential when undertaking sociological research within the state. I entered this challenging field of research almost by accident or necessity, and it has raised similar questions of ethics, emotions, and truth to those I have wrestled with in prior research within the sociology of religion, but in distinct ways. One of the key distinctions is living and working in a state and country now dominated by the right. In this essay I explore these questions and autoethnography as a potential answer.

As a White, feminine-presenting woman assigned female at birth, through my body, in many ways I conform to midwestern respectability politics. When I speak, my British accent sets me apart as an outsider, but in a way sparking curiosity rather than suspicion, fear, or hate. It is my profession, employer, research, and romantic life that may attract negative responses. I live daily the political polarization brought up in every focus group.

RELIGION TAKES CENTER STAGE IN THE 2028 ISSP SURVEY

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) has selected Religion as its topic for the 2028 ISSP cross-national survey. The ISSP Religion study was first conducted in 1991. It was fielded in 18 countries which collected 24,970 cases. Religion II was fielded in 1998 by 32 countries with 39,034 cases. Religion III in 2008 covered 46 countries, including four non-ISSP members with funds from the Templeton Foundation (Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania) with a total of 66,683 cases. Religion IV in 2018 was carried out in 48 countries, including 15 extra countries with funds from the Templeton Religion Trust (Algeria, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Vietnam) with a total of 68,186 cases.

The ISSP Religion data are available at: <https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/data-and-documentation>

At the next ISSP General Meeting on April 26-29 in Prague, the themes to focus on in the 2028 questionnaire will be chosen. Themes covered in the 2018 round may be augmented or reduced and new themes not previously covered may be added. Following ISSP protocol at least two-thirds of the questions will be replicated from previous rounds. After the themes are prioritized. The Religion drafting group will develop and pretest items for 2028. At the 2027 ISSP General Meeting the content of the 2028 survey will be finalized.

For more information on the ISSP visit <https://issp.org/>

Tom W. Smith

NORC at the University of Chicago

Co-Convenor of the 2028 ISSP Drafting Group on Religion



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2 MAY - 25 JUNE 2026

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RELIGIOSITY AND SOCIAL TRUST: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DIVERSITY INCREASES?

Ignacio Cáceres Draper

While the relationship between religiosity and social trust has been widely addressed, empirical results still show divergent conclusions. To enhance our understanding of this relationship, the article examines whether the religious context moderates this dynamic at the individual level within Latin America, characterized by a common religious matrix recently challenged by a substantial increase in religious diversity. Data from 18 countries between 2004 and 2018 are analyzed in multilevel models. The results show that religiosity significantly generates social trust: those who identify with some religion (mainly Catholics) and those who participate in religious organizations trust more. When including interactions between levels, a negative moderation is observed at the individual level: The more diverse the religious context, the less intense the positive effect of individual religiosity on trust. These findings highlight the nuanced role of religiosity in shaping trust within diverse social landscapes, emphasizing its importance as a socially situated factor.

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WOMEN IN EASTERN ORTHODOXY: QUESTIONS OF PASTORAL AND LITURGICAL PARTICIPATION

The call for papers is now open for an international academic seminar that will focus on the role of women in Eastern Orthodoxy from pastoral and liturgical perspectives. The seminar is organised by the School of Theology of the University of Eastern Finland in cooperation with the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and the Orthodox Church of Finland.

The event aims to bring together scholars working on interdisciplinary approaches to the study of women in Eastern Orthodoxy. We welcome proposals that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- The order of deaconesses: modern debates and ecclesial developments
- Women's participation in liturgical life, including prayer, chant, iconography, and ritual practice
- Pastoral care and spiritual guidance offered by and to women in Orthodox communities, in and outside ecclesial structures / hierarchies
- Theological and biblical interpretations shaping understandings of gender, vocation, and ministry
- Contemporary case studies on women's leadership and participation in diaspora or majority-Orthodox contexts
- Lived religion and ethnographic approaches to the experiences of Orthodox women today.

Abstract submission deadline: May 15, 2026.

Date and place: **November 2, 2026**, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies (online participation is possible).

Learn more and apply: <https://www.uef.fi/en/event/women-in-eastern-orthodoxy-questions-of-pastoral-and-liturgical-participation>

Further questions:

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