Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research

David Yamane *Editor*

Handbook of Religion and Society

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Abstract

The waning utility of popular church-sect typologies requires a new and more flexible framework for studying religious organizations and innovation therein. Here, we posit that religion's shape and change is best observed through a more nuanced examination of the social sources of innovation – including external environments, entrepreneurialism, social movements, and social networks – and measured via transformations in leadership, membership, and structure. Sociologists of religion thinking about organizations would do well to frame their conversations less in terms of narrow typologies and more in terms of the conditions that give rise to new behaviors, that increase the likelihood of innovation, and that ultimately impact the diffusion of innovation.

Faced with a sticky, amorphous mound of fresh cookie dough, one might be inclined to reach for the gingerbread man cookie cutter – or perhaps the heart, or the star. Rolled, flattened, and pressed by the prefabricated tin shape, the dough transforms into something familiar, something known. Something expected.

The routine is not dissimilar to the approach used all too often in viewing religion and religious organizations in society. Faced with something that takes a curious shape, perhaps with blurred boundaries and an opaque color, scholars reach to available tools to give it a name, a type, and a classification. Indeed, it is a particular penchant of the social scientist to draw out the organizational attributes of religion in the social world: seeing religion as organization enables us to see religion beyond the individual, beyond belief.

But to the extent that our kitchens are filled with only gingerbread men, hearts, and stars, we may also be implicitly assigning shapes to phenomena that merit new designs, or challenge

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the edges of what we may attempt to stuff them within. Trimming off the excess, moreover, may leave us unaware of innovation occurring outside imagined boundaries, our sights limited to prefabricated forms.

This chapter considers religious organizations with an eye toward *organizational innovation*. It begins with a brief rearview look at the dominant frames social scientists have created and deployed in studying religion in society, leveling a critical assessment of their limitations. The chapter next draws our attention to the *social sources of innovation* – whom or what is urging innovation in religious organizations? Fertile grounds and social sources foretell the *outcomes of innovation*, explored in a subsequent section. Next comes a discussion of the *diffusion of innovation*. Lastly, the chapter looks forward to *future directions* in related scholarship, offering corollary admonitions for studying organizational innovation in religion using appropriately flexible – and perhaps yet unknown – tools of analysis.

Church-Sect, R.I.P

The study of religion and organizations bears a strong legacy in the sociological canon, notably Max Weber (1949), and in church-sect typologies introduced by Weber's colleague, Ernst Troeltsch (1931). Debuting in *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (1931), the church-sect typology achieved celebrity status as a theoretical tool for assessing religion's organizational forms and developmental trajectories. Scholars including H. Richard Niebuhr (1929), Howard Becker (1932), J. Milton Yinger (1957), and Bryan R. Wilson (1970) filled our sociology of religion syllabi with concepts like churches, sects, new religious movements, denominations, ecclesia, established sects, cults, and the like. "Innovation" by this rubric follows a fairly logical trajectory: religious organizations initially break away as sects or new religious movements, exhibiting a high level of tension with their surrounding environments. In time, they move toward the "church" end of the spectrum, and friction with society reduces. The process eventually dissatisfies those seeking that original apartness, who in turn defect to start a sect anew. Innovation continues.

But the popularity of the church-sect typology has not guarded it against steady criticisms through years of (over)use. Relying on rationalized, logical underpinnings, the church-sect typology is incredibly powerful for explaining standardized pathways. However, when those pathways account for less and less of the religious landscape, the effectiveness of the typology quickly breaks down. Its limited applicability in non-Western contexts, its anachronistic fit to contemporary religion, and the complexity of its terminology and varying definitions leave its current theoretical unity wanting (Bromley and Melton 2012; Dawson 2009). New organizational forms and adaptations do not necessarily march in lockstep along a standardized pole from "sect" to "church." This dichotomous split – even when nuanced with additional stops in-between – creates the kind of binary classification that Kniss (2014, p. 354) warns will "exaggerate and unwittingly reproduce or exacerbate conflict between the binary categories we describe." Innovation in religious organizations is, in reality, more complex.

The church-sect typology, moreover, obscures vast amounts of diversity in the field of religion. Religion and religious organizations are constantly evolving, as "tradition" meets new sociocultural contexts, shifting demographics, religious pluralism, new cultural norms, and so forth. Change is fundamental to the very nature of organizations, even amidst relative stability (Rogers 2003). Max Weber and Emile Durkheim observed as much. But stagnant typologies stifle more than seed contemporary examinations of organizational innovation. Myriad developments at the intersection of religion, organizations, and change present an alternative vantage point on this evolution. It is time for "grand theories" to yield to more idiosyncratic iterations of decline, stability, and revival (Singleton 2014). Here, a metaanalysis of developments come together under the banner of *organizational innovation*.

Innovation, Kanter (1983, p. 20) tells us, denotes "the process of bringing any new,

problem-solving idea into use." It is "the generation, acceptance, and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or services," and "involves the capacity to change or adapt" (Kanter 1983, p. 20–21). It may be viewed both as process and as outcome (Crossan and Apaydin 2010). Organizational innovation denotes newness in ideas and behavior, realized through links to environments, structures, and performance (Lam 2006). In corporate settings, organizational innovation frequently necessitates cutting costs and keeping ahead of market competition. In religious settings, organizational innovation may re-frame religious practice, commitment, production, and consumption within a plural and deregulated religious market (Stark and Finke 2000).

Organizational innovation is often the progeny of changes in society, whether planned or not. "The emergence and structure of new organizational forms are affected by their particular institutional contexts" (Lam 2006, p. 132). Religion's inherent social embeddedness means that changes are as much a reflection of shifting external environments as they are entrepreneurially-induced; change happens *to* religious organizations just as change gets introduced *by* religious organizations. As such, the occurrence and diffusion of innovation may be intended or unintended: a consequence of organizers' creativity, or a side effect of what is happening in the larger ecological field.

Planned innovation would fall under the camp of "planned change" (Porras and Robertson 1992), or "the activities necessary to modify strategies, structures, and processes to increase an organization's effectiveness" (Cummings and Worley 2014, p. 42). Planned change is self-initiated, deliberate, and responsive to perceived problems or needs. Religious leaders – seeing membership declines, an increasingly global outreach, or strategic growth – may undertake new forms of community, services, administration, and so on, intending to improve their religious work, mission, and outcomes. Scholars of organization describe *unplanned* innovation, by contrast, as more responsive than deliberate. Unplanned innovation is often a byproduct of unanticipated external change. Generational shifts among religious adherents, precipitous drops in financial stability, fertility, and migration can all harken unplanned innovation among religious organizations.

The Social Sources of Innovation

What spawns innovation – planned and unplanned – in religious organizations? To identify and understand the innovation occurring in religious organizations today, we must look to its social sources. Just as Niebuhr (1929, p. 27) wrote nearly a century ago, "if religion supplies the energy, the goal, and the motive of sectarian movements, social factors no less decidedly supply the occasion, and determine the form the religious dynamic will take." Nonreligious factors carry as much influence as religious factors.

Innovation and its barriers can stem from external environments, the organizations themselves, or groups and individuals therein (Hueske and Guenther 2015). Both structure and agency breed change. Here, we summarize themes in scholarship on innovation origins, pointing to the particular relevance of external environments, entrepreneurialism, social movements, and social networks as instrumental to generating innovation in religious organizations.

External Environments

Religious organizations operate in an increasingly plural (sometimes interpreted as competitive) religious context. Globally, demographers paint a big-picture glimpse of organizational fields within which religion will necessarily innovate. While Christianity remains in the majority globally, demographers anticipate fast growth in Islam and declines among atheists, agnostics, and others unaffiliated (Pew Research Center 2015a). Smaller folk religions will also grow in absolute numbers. Higher fertility rates and younger adherents portend growth or stability for Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity as a proportion of the projected 2050 global population (Stonawski et al. 2015). Religious organizations

also occupy an ecological context of ever-increasing religious diversity brought on by immigration and religious switching (Pew Research Center 2015a). Such global plurality begets innovation to ensure vitality (see also Kivisto's chapter on "International Migration" in this volume).

In the North American context, Christian proportions have declined as proportions of the unaffiliated rise. Drawing on the multi-wave National Congregations Study (NCS) in his book *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*, Chaves (2011) summarizes several trends that bear particularly on the U.S. context and on organizational life. These include: (1) looser connections between congregations and denominations; (2) more computer technology; (3) more informal worship; (4) older congregants; (5) more high-income and college-educated congregants; (6) more people concentrated in very large churches; and (7) increasing ethnic diversity within predominantly white congregations (Chaves 2011, p. 55–56).

Modernization, moreover, fuels a particular context enlivening religious organizations, one described by some scholars as deeply consumer-oriented. The marketing and "branding" of religion can incentivize large-scale marketization (Usunier and Stolz 2014). Popular religion breeds the commodification of religious goods, whether ritual paraphernalia (Jones 2010) or Santa Muerte votive candles (Chesnut 2011). Such processes may expand religious products but decrease religiosity (Usunier and Stolz 2014). Consumerism, moreover, may produce a more individualized or even tourist-oriented mentality (Lyons 2000). Religion-as-market or religion-as-brand can breed innovation in religious organization that caters to (or resists) these modernizing tendencies (Miller and Miller 2005; Packard and Sanders 2013).

Religious organizations today also operate within a sphere of declining institutional affiliation overall – a suspicion, some articulate, of any formal organization (religious or otherwise). U.S. respondents' trust in the government, for example, peaked at 77 % in 1964 before dropping to an all-time low 17 % in 2011 (Pew Research Center 2015c). Gallup (2015) reports that confidence in all social institutions except the military and small business are below historical averages. The confidence that Americans once felt in organizations, leaders, and institutions has largely given way to distrust. Observed innovations thus share a common source: distrust in large, institutional structures.

Played out in the realm of religion, traditionally stalwart organizational spaces navigate new skepticism. The World Economic Forum (2015) reports that while leaders in nearly all sectors are distrusted, religious organizations rank among those least trustworthy. And far from just being a cohort effect, these levels of distrust have risen for every generation. In short, it appears that today's religious organizations are living in an unremitting era of institutional distrust. Organizational innovation in religion is not divorced from these larger social trends.

The presence and rise of the "nones" highlights one facet of this institutional disconnect (see Cragun's chapter on "Nonreligion and Atheism" in this volume). Recent reports from the Pew Research Center show a dramatic increase in the rise of religiously unaffiliated. 23 % of the U.S. population and 16 % of the population worldwide identify with "nothing in particular" when it comes to an institutional religious affiliation (Pew Research Center 2015a, b). The demographic profile of religious nones, moreover, leaning heavily toward millennials, suggests that the mainstream forms of religious organization will face attendance issues for years to come.

Nones may, by definition, challenge the very concept of religious organization in modern social contexts. They may represent either a cause or a consequence of innovation. Tamney et al. (1989, p. 216) noted years ago that "in a society where almost everyone has a religious identity, a religious none can be considered innovative." More recently, Baker and Smith (2009a, b) revived work in this category by identifying predictive factors of someone claiming "none" as a status. They sorted religious nones into categories of atheist, agnostic, or unchurched, the latter term particularly relevant given its contingency upon organizational linkages. Their conclusion

was that the rise of the nones is not evidence that modern society results in the decline of religion, but rather that "modernizing forces *alter* religion" (Baker and Smith 2009a, p. 732). In other words, the nones are a prime source of innovation in the religious landscape both in terms of their increasing size and presence, and in efforts by religious organizations to attract them.

The history of the religious marketplace in America suggests that churches will respond to these shifts in affiliation with intense innovation and competition (Finke and Stark 2005). Some postulate that entire organization forms (e.g., denominationalism) are under threat, as mainline denominations continue to lose adherents more rapidly than other sectors (see, e.g., Sherkat 2001). Innovation can stave off an otherwise terminal fate.

Also at issue here is whether and how religious organizations will foster innovation while preserving core teachings – or, perhaps, adapt the latter modestly so as to preserve the integrity of extant traditions (Finke 2004). Religious organizations that chase innovation while neglecting to protect core teachings, Finke (2004) argues, will end up too "loose" while those who eschew innovation at every turn will be too "strict." Innovation may come, at first, from small, unregulated religious expressions that ultimately find their way into dominant, mainstream religious expressions, Finke (2004, pp. 30–31) tells us: "Even small religious organizations that never enter the mainstream or form even a single congregation can shape the future of American religion…[s]ect movements, independent churches, para-church groups, and other small religious organizations generate innovations that are adapted throughout American religion." The powers of isomorphism, moreover, could predict the erosion of core values in otherwise stagnant institutions.

Changes to religious organizations' external environments predicate many of the innovations occurring at both the margins of religion (as people move away from engaging large institutions) and in the mainstream (in innovative spaces of traditional religious organizations). New expressions may ultimately be the source of major and lasting change in the religious landscape.

Entrepreneurialism

Entrepreneurs are generally understood to be organizational actors who combine the primary dimensions of risk and innovation (Drucker 2014 [1985]). While early scholarship focused on the entrepreneur as a component of the for-profit world, recent scholarship has turned its attention to expanding both the scope of the entrepreneur as well as the industries where entrepreneurs might be found. Entrepreneurs are now generally understood to be a component of all aspects of the for-profit, non-profit and government worlds (Thornton 1999).

Scholars in the sociology of religion have also begun to take the role of the entrepreneur seriously. In a study that closely mirrors scholarship on for-profit entrepreneurs, Lee and Sinitiere (2009, p. 3) argue that rather than offering a unique view of Christianity in order to attract followers, "religious suppliers thrive in a competitive spiritual marketplace because they are quick, decisive, and flexible in reacting to changing conditions, savvy at packaging and marketing their ministries, and resourceful at offering spiritual rewards that resonate with the existential needs and cultural tastes of the public." Their work suggests that scholars should not overlook the impact that individual innovators can have on organizational culture and structure. With very little formal education and training, religious leaders have successfully pushed into new mediums and championed new religious movements as well as reviving old messages. They remind us to look outside of traditional pathways when considering the sources of organizational change.

In this way, it is not simply those institutional actors with access to vast amounts of resources who spawn innovation. Religion entrepreneurs are often found among relative industry outsiders, where there is room to experiment and hone new ideas. This is especially true when thinking about new religious movements (NRMs). NRMs are characterized by religion entrepreneurs' ability to articulate compelling new visions of the divine. Others may have articulated such visions earlier but were unable to make them stick. This further highlights the importance of the successful

entrepreneur who is able to find the right message and practice at the right time for the right audience. Finke and Iannaconne (1993) actually argue that this "supply side" dynamic has been the primary driver behind religious innovation and religious change more generally. But instead of thinking about NRM leaders as innovators, too often we think about them as charismatic leaders, or assess the way that their charisma become routinized. These are worthy questions, of course, but lose sight of entrepreneurs' role in bringing new ideas, practices, and beliefs onto the religious scene.

Established congregations, too, feel the effects of entrepreneurial innovation. McRoberts (1999) argues explicitly that religion entrepreneurs can change traditional religious spaces. This is especially the case for founding pastors who "are 'entrepreneurs' in the sense that they established churches to fill a perceived void" (McRoberts 1999, p. 58). Founding pastors, in particular, are compelled to scan the religious landscape in search of inefficiencies in the religious marketplace, even within their own tradition. In order to succeed, they must cater to those not well-served by existing religious organizations.

In this same vein, Sargeant (2000) argues that one of the fundamental components of evangelicalism in the United States is a reliance on an entrepreneurial framework. His examination of the rise of seeker churches focuses on the entrepreneurial role of the pastor in acting as CEO and spiritual leader. Modern evangelicalism requires religious leaders to think strategically not just about religious content, but also about form and function. Sargeant further notes that the idea of pastor as both a religious leader and an organizational manager and strategic visionary is far from new in the field of religion. He links the development and increasing religiosity of Americans throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the entrepreneurial abilities of pastors.

Importantly, Sargeant points out that this kind of innovation is necessary for organizations that thrive on both maintaining tradition and adapting to shifting cultural norms. Sargeant (2000, p. ix) writes that "as an entrepreneurial and innovative yet also traditional and conservative movement, evangelicalism provides an excellent window onto how religious groups negotiate the tensions between social change…and preserving traditional belief." The power of this argument, of course, is that it extends far beyond the evangelical movement. It provides a framework for understanding the role of the entrepreneur in producing innovations across the field of religion.

Thinking about religion entrepreneurs through a religious marketplace framework means understanding changes in the field of religion as being less about competition and more about innovation. Rather than competing with one another for the same congregants, religious innovators find new and creative ways to engage contemporary culture while maintaining traditional and important religious values. In the language of neoinstitutional theory, these entrepreneurs must bridge technical and institutional pressures just to survive, as their world is both competitive (technical) and filled with the need to signal legitimacy (institutional) (Scott and Meyer 1991). This combination of pressures creates special challenges for religion entrepreneurs, and provides an important source of innovation in the field of religion as a whole.

Social Movements

Social movements operate as another key social source of organizational innovation in religion. Like all organizations, religious collectives can be rife with conflict and politics. In advancing claims, presenting challenges, and disrupting the quotidian, social movements generate opportunities to bring structural and cultural change to religious organizations.

A veritable sea change in social movement scholarship of late has usefully broadened our attention to include movements targeting nonstate institutions (Van Dyke et al. 2004). This needed corrective has spawned a number of studies examining how social movements can target – and innovate within – religious organizations. Progressive bishops, for example, advanced revolutionary changes during Vatican II (Wilde 2007); lay Catholics mobilized to address abusive

practices (Bruce 2011); the New Sanctuary Movement blurred lines of immigrant activism in religion and politics (Yukich 2013). Seeing religious organizations as a locus of strategic action, moreover, has usefully destabilized the very definition of a social movement. New conceptualizations define such forms of collective action internal to religious and other organizations as "intrainstitutional social movements" (Bruce 2011). Movements can challenge authority in all its manifestations, including authority housed in and through religious organizations.

By developing into social movement organizations (SMOs) themselves, moreover, movements can bring innovation to religion as both origin and target. Bypassing the state as the central or sole locus of change means that religious SMOs can transform civil society through alternative organizational influences. Davis and Robinson (2012) show in their study of four religiously orthodox movements, for example, how religious movements deconstruct the very notion of separate, defined organizational spheres where religion belongs – and where it does not – in modern social contexts.

Scholarship in social movements and organizations has converged and proliferated in recent years (Davis and Zald 2005; Walker 2012), albeit relatively absent a proportionate focus on religious organizations specifically. Among the fruits of scholarship at this nexus is an appreciation for alternative, atypical movement tactics. Nepstad (2011, 2015), Kucinskas (2014), and others have detailed the ways in which religious and spiritual movements can engage non-confrontational tactics in protest. This may include withholding material resources, introducing discursive politics, or reframing collective identities. Just as the shift beyond the state-as-movement-target has redefined social movements, so too has the shift toward nonconventional tactics redefined movement repertoires. A cultural turn in social movement scholarship has likewise introduced new tools for seeing how religion, religious actors, religious tactics, and religious collectives can introduce organizational innovation across multiple institutional spheres.

Ironically, while we are learning more about religious social movements, we still know relatively little about movements targeting religious organizations themselves, nor their related innovation outcomes. Religion can indeed be disruptive…even to religion. The allure of studying the seemingly (but in fact not) contradictory spaces of religion and protest appears to largely diminish at the door of religious organizations themselves. Prospects are rich. Increased inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) people and families in Christian organizations, as just one example of many, has been traced to "organized and sustained efforts…to challenge religiously rooted condemnations of homosexuality" via social movements targeting religious organizations (Hopkins 2014, p. 172).

Acknowledging social movements as a source of innovation means hammering yet another nail in the coffin of overly-constrictive conceptual tools for seeing innovation in religion. Iterations of "church" and "sect" can scarcely account for the kind of strategic action introduced by social movement actors; using "denomination" as the unit of analysis can overemphasize ideological uniformity (Kniss and Burns 2004). The rigidity of oft-applied conceptual tools in studying organizations may appear to be at odds with the presumed spontaneity and grassroots character of social movements (Clemens 2005). But innovation in religious organizations is assuredly intertwined with movement mobilization therein.

Social Networks

Yet another important social source of innovation is social networks. As organizational scholars have long noted, network analysis allows researchers to consider the embedded roles that activate and constrain individuals in an organization, as well as organizations in a field (Brass et al. 2004). Networks, then, are an important point of innovation for organizations.

Ammerman's (1997) *Congregation and Community* still stands as a seminal work in this area. Social networks, as revealed through case

studies, comprise part of a larger ecological approach to understanding congregations and change. Though networks have a distinct influence on congregational innovation, the role of networks is not always the same. Niche congregations require networks that extend beyond the local neighborhood and community. Their source of innovation comes from external influence as a way to establish a distinct position in the religious marketplace. Mainstream congregations, on the other hand, may look more like the traditional parish, with stronger ties to the local community. Their innovation comes from drawing on an embedded network of affiliation that can mobilize resources to offset the costs of innovation. This is especially true for congregations in transition – local networks can help to assemble resources that can buy time for organizations to figure out their changing landscape and adapt appropriately.

While numerous studies have taken up Ammerman's call for approaching congregational studies from an ecological perspective, few have focused explicitly on embedded social networks as the unit of analysis for innovation or stability. Among important recent works that point to social networks as a source of innovation, at least in part, is Ellingson's work on the megachurch (Ellingson 2007, 2009, 2010). Throughout his work, Ellingson notes that new megachurches often develop out of an explicit attempt by smaller and medium size congregations to mimic the successful practices and ideologies presented in local megachurches. Far from chasing growth for the sake of growth, these congregations are often innovating for survival. The presence of a megachurch demands innovation by existing congregations; otherwise, they risk losing members and declining to the point of irrelevance or even nonexistence (Ellingson 2010). In this way, the most successful entrepreneurs – from either within or outside of the institution – can have a dramatic effect on entire organizational ecologies.

The local environment and context of an organization may be diminishing in importance as modern technology erodes traditional physical boundaries. Congregational innovation comes from networks far beyond the physical reach of the local congregation. Guest, working out of the United Kingdom, takes an ecological approach to account for the role of the social network in congregational innovation. In his book, *Evangelical Identity and Contemporary Culture: A Congregational Study in Innovation*, Guest (2007) updates Ammerman's approach in ways that account for modern communication technologies. Instead of outside influences coming primarily from well-connected congregational leaders, Guest argues that individual congregants establish an identity that is increasingly connected and mediated through larger discourses about evangelicalism in general.

Within late modernity, evangelical ideas are negotiated within a far more complex, intricate and international network than ever before. This network not only shapes the construction of evangelicalism as a global phenomenon, but also infiltrates the construction of evangelical identity within local congregations. In this sense, mediating structures need to be reconceived and the maintenance of religious values addressed using a new set of theoretical tools (Guest 2007, pp. 197–98).

Tapping into these conversations and identities through social media and the internet more generally can bring these influences and innovations to bear on local congregations. The primary source of innovation, then, is potentially far removed from any individual congregation. This places even greater emphasis on a few very successful entrepreneurs who are able to leverage social networks in order to disseminate new ideas, styles of worship, and religious organizing.

Innovation Outcomes

Whether planned or unplanned – and whether introduced by external environments, entrepreneurs, social movements, or social networks – religious organizations present ample evidence of novel ideas, shapes, adaptations, and revitalization. The *outcomes* of organizational innovation are grouped here into three general

categories: (1) membership, (2) leadership, and (3) structure. Though not exhaustive, this threefold categorization offers an intentional look into extant avenues of contemporary change. We review and present examples of each, in turn.

Innovation in Membership

Who belongs to religious organizations? Where do we see innovation in terms of a shifting participant base, intended audience, or institutional affiliation? While organizational membership and organizational structure may be viewed as separate, the two are indelibly linked in processes of innovation: new/fewer/different members beget new and different forms of religious organization. An internally diverse membership also begets innovation. And the diffusion of innovation to organizations involves a complex interplay of changes adopted by individuals who belong, and individuals who are embedded in a shared organizational networks.

Organizational religious ties remain an incredibly important predictor of religious affiliation. Baker and Smith (2009) show that frequent church attendance as a child significantly decreases the chances of claiming no religious affiliation as an adult. Millennials' diminished interest in institutional religion, however, suggests that the immediate future for traditional religious organizations will require adaptation for survival. Congregations are rapidly changing strategies in response to increasing numbers of "nones." A sizeable number of people claiming no religious affiliation still retain some belief in a higher power. The nones have, thus, become a driving force behind religious innovation outside of traditional religious institutions. New religious products and marketplaces developed in recent years aim to reach the "spiritual but not religious" crowd. And "[f]ar from discreet 'religious' and 'spiritual' institutional domains, the robust religious organizations of the United States are prime sources of the production of the spiritual experiences most prevalent in the culture" (Ammerman 2014, p. 127). Rather than signaling the decline of religion in America, there is every reason to believe that we sit at a time ripe for new organizational forms and practices to emerge.

Another innovative aspect of the "demand" side of the spiritual marketplace is the growing number of "dechurched," or those who have left the institutional church but retain their faith (Packard and Hope 2015). This describes individuals who are not necessarily distancing themselves from religion, per se, but from certain iterations and even linguistic constructions of religious organization. They are sometimes referred to as the "dones," as in they are "done" with church, but not with faith or God(s). They have disengaged from organized religion largely due to dissatisfaction with the institutional and organizational arrangements. While specific theological positions or a poor Sunday morning experience were reasons to switch churches, Packard and Hope (2015) found that disengaging from organized religion altogether was more related to stifling bureaucratic structures, a singular pastoral voice of authority, and too much emphasis on a highly produced Sunday morning experience. In other words, the "dones" rejected the homogenizing force of the institutional church. But rather than rejecting their faith as well, the dechurched are catalyzing new ways of engaging spirituality outside institutional structures.

Scholars are documenting numerous ways that formal religious organizations are responding to a shift in (and abandonment of) institutional affiliation. Among the organizational developments cited by social scientists on this front is the "emerging church movement" (ECM). Documented by Bielo (2011), Packard (2012), and Marti and Ganiel (2014), among others, ECM refers to conscious organizational responses that critique and reframe extant evangelical or Christian narratives. Through such new structures as "pluralist congregations" inviting openness to "religious individualization" (Marti and Ganiel 2014), emerging Christianity affords both community and individualism. A pluralist congregation, for example, might replace a traditional sermon with a discussion and conversation. Building understanding takes precedence over preaching specific doctrines and creeds. This

synthesis between individual and organizational religious change generates not only more loosely-tethered membership but also new styles of worship which are more participatory and are designed to reach an itinerant and plural audience. Services might be asynchronous, for example, with participants moving through prayer vigils, readings, discussions, communion, Stations of the Cross, and other worship elements.

Mainstream traditions, too, participate in generating innovative forms of spiritual engagement in response to declines in formal affiliation. Contemporary worship styles are increasingly informal, relying less upon written programs and more upon drums, dancing, informal greetings, projection equipment, and so forth (Chaves and Anderson 2014). Recent trends in worship have veered similarly toward embodied ritual including prayer labyrinths, yoga, and meditation. Further, the source of worship style innovation is increasingly likely to come from local, non-institutional sources than from denominational authorities, further indicating a shift away from dominant institutional religious experiences (Chou and Russell 2006). Innovation in established denominations, however, faces the simultaneous challenge of adhering to core teachings in order to sustain vitality (Finke 2004).

Creative innovation outcomes have also been observed at the juncture of multiple faith communities and interfaith organizations. Collaboration among religious groups sharing political goals can generate what Yukich and Braunstein (2014) call "new edge practices." These include "aggregative practices" that combine side-by-side the symbols, languages, and practices of faith groups as well as "integrative practices" that merge and mix those same symbols, languages, and practices together (Yukich and Braunstein 2014, p. 801). Jointly-issued public policy statements, for example, may deploy phrases and symbols from multiple traditions to advance an agreed-upon collective good such as gun control. Innovative prayers or songs highlighting non-specific themes like God or humanity can unite religious collectives mobilizing to defeat racism. Greater diversity within an organization, whether interfaith or otherwise, can increase the likelihood of innovation (Braunstein et al. 2014).

The changing racial and ethnic composition of religious organizations reveals another outcome of innovation (or its counterpart, the status quo). For example, Hawkins and Sinitiere (2014, p. 1) observe, "A new era of multiethnic and multiracial sensibilities seems to be dawning across the American evangelical landscape, manifesting itself in a myriad of ways." Conversation and actions surrounding racial diversity surface across religious organizations with new prominence as nations including the United States grow increasingly diverse racially. Nonetheless, membership in religious congregations continues to reflect strong internal racial homogeneity. A mere 14 % of U.S. congregations contain no more than 80 % of one racial group and only 20 % of attendees go to congregations where no ethnic group dominates (Chaves and Anderson 2014). Racial diversity internal to religious organizations remains rare.

Despite this continuity in congregational homogeneity, recent percentages of multiracial membership reported in the third wave of the National Congregations Study (NCS) are notably higher than earlier measurements. This suggests that multiracial membership is indeed another outcome of organizational innovation, as congregations are less and less likely to be comprised overwhelmingly of one racial group. Perhaps most notably, "White congregations are less predominantly white than they were" (Chaves and Anderson 2014, p. 680). Multiracial congregations prompt new forms of worship, as congregants come together to do the work necessary to put on a weekly worship service. Marti (2012) notes in *Worship Across the Racial Divide* that the production of worship – even more so than the actual style – acts as an important factor in promoting diversity within a congregation.

Nevertheless, Edwards et al. (2013) critique the organizational innovation surrounding multiracial congregations as stemming primarily from minorities' presence in white congregations, not the reverse. This affirms their contention that "for racial diversity to occur in congregations it is the

interest of whites that must be served" (Edwards et al. 2013, p. 215). The diffusion of innovation in these spaces may, thus, be stifled by the persistent privileging of dominant groups.

New immigrants, too, evidence innovation in religious organizations. More recent arrivals participate in religious organizations at higher levels than non-immigrants or earlier arrivals (Foley and Hoge 2007). Denominations accommodate ever-higher proportions of non-English language offerings (e.g., CARA 2014). Niche, immigrant-serving congregations transform existing religious organizations amidst neighborhood change (Kniss and Numrich 2007; Cimino et al. 2013). Immigrants are transnationalizing the religious experience in multiple ways (Levitt 2007). Subcultural immigrant communities sharing spaces with other subcultural communities highlight challenges to power in shared spaces (eg Hoover 2014). Here too, as with Edwards' observations of multiracial congregations, studies of immigrant assimilation showcase the hegemony of a dominant Protestant organizational form (Bender and Klassen 2010; Cadge 2008; Williams 2007).

Religious organizations also look different today in terms of the acceptance and integration of participants identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Wave III of the National Congregations Study revealed a fairly rapid increase in the percentage of congregations permitting gays and lesbians to be full members – now nearly half (Chaves and Anderson 2014). Increased openness may stem from a combination of factors including clergy age, members' education, and activities elsewhere that bridge social divisions (Adler 2012). The trend of increasing openness to LGBT members is not consistent across denominations, however, highlighting the dual role of broader social-cultural contexts and the social sources of innovation in introducing organizational change. Indeed, another thread of recent scholarship highlights organizational attempts to excise homosexuality from religious organizations and adherents through "reparative therapy" and ex-gay ministries (Gerber 2012; Creek 2014). And even among religious organizations explicitly welcoming to all sexual orientations, many decouple this from actions that meaningfully institutionalize such a welcome (Scheitle et al. 2010).

Innovation in Leadership

Leadership opens another window onto notable examples of innovation outcomes in religious organizations, from representation to polity change to reformed engagement to collaboration. Religious leaders occupy key decision-making powers to adapt organizations in response to shifts in membership, external environments, new opportunities, or other altered organizational contexts. But leaders in and of themselves also represent an outcome of innovation: Who is in charge? Who is not? How are religious organizations innovating in terms of openness, empowerment, hiring, and allocating responsibility?

Although nearly all religious traditions still use professional ministers, there has been a noted push to limit or circumscribe these powers, whether out of choice or necessity. The Catholic Church, for example, has experienced a precipitous decline in the total number of clergy and vowed religious in recent decades. Priest shortages have catalyzed the outsourcing of roles and tasks previously held exclusively by ordained male priests; ministry responsibilities are carried out increasingly by paid laypersons, eight in ten of whom are women (CARA 2011). Resource-driven changes in leadership may also motivate more fundamental changes, such as Schoenherr's suggestion in *Goodbye Father* (2002) that declines in ordination may unlock the priesthood from celibate exclusivity. Or, for the married Catholic convert priests that Sullins (2015) describes, leadership innovation may (ironically, perhaps) work to affirm existing church teachings, such as priests' celibacy. As Sullins (2015, p. 214) puts it, "married priests are found to be the exceptions that prove the rule."

Declining membership rolls in mainline traditions have also taken a toll on budgets, reducing the ability of organizations to hire and rely upon full-time paid ministers. Foreshadowing the organizational permeability that Ammerman (2014)

later identifies, Pitt (2012) notes the various strategies that ministers and congregations employ to reconcile the reality that for many congregations a full-time pastor is not an option. They instead rely upon "bivocational" pastors, outsourcing a range of administrative and ministerial needs to others. The consequence is organizations that lean heavily on lay leadership to complete many formerly "professional" tasks. This more distributed leadership model restructures religious organizations accordingly.

Innovative fronts in religious organizational leadership also link back to aforementioned themes of institutional suspicion. "Emerging Christians," for example, resist traditional powers allocated to a professional clergy and singular organizational authority (Packard 2011). Catholic clergy's relatively isolated power was challenged in the wake of abuse allegations (Bruce 2011). Some leaders' singular personalities manage to carve out segments of the religious market that respond directly to them as opposed to a particular system of belief or theological position. The most successful of these religion entrepreneurs may single-handedly change the religious organizational landscape. Lee and Sinitiere (2009) explore this dynamic in *Holy Mavericks*, arguing that a new age of celebrity pastors including Brian McLaren, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, and T.D. Jakes shows the importance of supply side theoretical perspectives.

Women comprise an increasing proportion of elite leaders in religious organizations. Approximately one in ten American congregations are led by women in senior ordained positions (Faith Communities Today 2010). Their presence represents a substantial change to American mainline Protestant and Jewish congregations over the last half century. Scholars are documenting ways in which women's leadership is changing the internal administrative patterns of organizations, such as through preaching or forming study groups on more controversial topics (Olson et al. 2005). But despite the expanded inclusivity of women in key decision-making capacities, sociologists also note that religious organizations remain masculine-gendered institutions through their ongoing construction of leadership ideals, symbols, and discourse (Whitehead 2013). Women leaders report discrimination (Ingersoll 2003) and lower levels of social support (McDuff 2001). Implicit bias can inhibit the innovation that would otherwise foster higher proportions of women clergy and increasingly feminized organizational regimes. Here again, innovation does not automatically imply diffusion to organizational structures and processes.

As individuals from new social positions occupy key leadership positions in religious organizations, this can also affect the ways in which religious organizations interface with broader social and political realms. By way of example, Olson et al. (2005) report that women's presence among lead clergy has shifted priorities in congregations' political advocacy, elevating issues of social justice and family. On the other hand, head clergy leading multiracial congregations occupy inherently strained positions as they navigate two distinct populations. "Race affects the capacity of interracial church head clergy to negotiate their role and deal with role strain" (Edwards 2014, p. 74). The field is ripe for additional assessments of how long-marginalized voices are gaining new prevalence and power, potentially shifting organizational priorities, structures, and outcomes within complex organizational environments.

Innovation in Structure

Beyond (and intertwined with) the outcomes of innovation observed among members and leaders, the forms of religious organizations, too, showcase innovation outcomes sewn by social sources. Structural iterations of religious organization are neither rigid nor stagnant. Recent work (notably Ammerman's [2014] *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*) demonstrates the degree to which religion and spirituality are not connected solely to religious institutions. Ammerman argues that porous institutional boundaries call into question the divide between the sacred and the secular, the private and the public. If religious practice cannot be confined to

a particular time and place, we need to do a better job of looking for it elsewhere. Ammerman (2014, p. 6) writes that "we cannot assume we will find religion in the predictable places or in the predictable forms. And if we do not find as much of it in those predictable places as we did before, we cannot assume that it is disappearing."

To take just one recent example of where we might look for variation in religious experience, Ferguson and Tamburello (2015) suggest that people who live in regions with a nicer natural environment use those amenities as a spiritual resource that competes with traditional, brick and mortar houses of worship. This same line of thinking brings attention also to innovative spaces where religious ideals spawn changed structures and directions, whether in companies (Gallagher and Buckeye 2014), fraternities (Gurrentz 2014), homeless shelters (Mulder 2004), or countless other social settings. Seeing innovation in religious organizations by this rubric necessitates a substantially revised typology.

Structural responses in the field of religion to growing institutional skepticism have been gradual. Just as membership reflects trends toward deinstitutionalization, so too do congregations now report lower levels of attachment. Fewer congregations claim formal affiliation with a denomination, interact with denominational representatives, or financially contribute to a denomination (though the majority of congregations still do) (Chaves and Anderson 2014). This positions some religious organizations in comparatively more isolated organizational fields, perhaps more immune to the sort of institutional isomorphism that has been traditionally observed among congregations in the same denomination. Denominational affiliation, once the norm, has slowly given way to non-denominational churches and more autonomous congregational entities including the megachurch.

Where institutional scholars focusing on the powers of isomorphism have done well to show why organizations, including religious ones, exhibit so much conformity, the margins of religious life have traditionally contained much variability. Popielarz and Neal (2007) show that competition does not always lead to extinction among organizations, but sometime results in the creation of a new niche that appeals to people who are left out of dominant forms. Marginalization, exclusion, or specialized need can yield structural innovation. LGBT Muslim support groups, for example, provide community among those otherwise exempt from full "religious citizenship" (Yip 2007, p. 210). Gay Muslims invent spaces for congruent identity work between religion and homosexuality, thereby reducing stigma (Siraj 2014). Lesbian Hindu couples attempt to marry in Indian temples despite the illegality of same-sex marriage there (Takhar 2014).

A bevy of recent research lends credence to the prevalance of niche organizational forms. The emerging church movement, "personal parishes" for specialized populations of Catholics, neo-monasticism, house churches, and the like all evidence a growing movement away from traditionally-organized dominant institutions, toward niche-specific modes of organization. Whether by opportunity or constraint, religious organizations can "compel congregations to reexamine their identities and play new roles" (Cimino 2013, p. 78), including catering to a niche-specific market. Just as many school districts have welcomed the advent of niche-serving charter schools, so too are some religious traditions innovating through parallel moves toward "charter churches," with formal designation as such (Bruce 2017).

Innovative niche molds, moreover, intersect studies in religious organization that question the constitutive criteria of service to an immediately proximate neighborhood. While a parish structure more traditionally prescribes religious organization to a given catchment area, the niche congregational or de facto congregational structure draws instead from a self-selected or formally-identified body of adherents (Ammerman 1997; Warner 1993). Geographically nodal organizational structures have fostered a robust field of ecologically-situated, neighborhood-focused study. Niche organizational structures, by contrast, invite new questions around innovative spaces that span (or even erase) traditional geographic boundaries.

Niche congregations "create an identity relatively independent of context" (Ammerman 1997, p. 131); diverse and mobile populations enable these innovative organizational outcomes.

Religious organizations' encounter with changing urban populations likewise elevates the pertinence of place. A slow or sudden disjuncture between historic membership and neighborhood composition can yield varied outcomes. Religious organizations and those leading them are hardly passive bystanders to gentrification (Levitt 2007). Religious bodies can be instrumental in either exhibiting staying power in neighborhoods (Gamm 2009) or enabling white flight through congregational polity that facilitates property sale and suburban relocation (Mulder 2015). Kniss and Numrich (2007, p. 200–1) suggest that congregations may align with a pattern of (1) wholly changed member populations, (2) a secondary add-on member population, (3) a status quo but now largely dispersed membership; and (4) relocations driven by choice and idiosyncratic reasons, rather than neighborhood. Tokke (2013) presents evidence that congregations may adapt social and cultural elements to shifting demographics, but still retain a consistent theology.

Individual Hindu leaders, for example, have entrepreneurially developed new social and religious structures in altered cityscapes (Weiner 2013). Some Catholic dioceses have strategically established parishes less reliant upon geography, preserving a symbolic organizational presence amidst membership declines (Bruce 2016). Together, these innovations challenge the default notion of religious organizational structures as indelibly emergent from, embedded in, and acting in service to their immediate geographic contexts. Geographic disentanglement, moreover, carries substantial consequences for the ways that religious organizations relate to their proximate neighbors. McRoberts (2005), for example, points out that organizations comprised of participants who drive in from elsewhere may cripple a community's efforts to sustain and empower those living just next door.

The structure of religious organizations can also change at the behest of state control or legal restrictions. City codes, for example, may force organizations to allocate resources to renovation to meet building codes or landmark requirements (Tokke 2013). Operating within the context of Communist rule can stifle formal religious organizations, while facilitating innovation around less-institutionalized modes of religion. Writing of this situation in China, Yang (2012, p. 87) describes how China's religious market is divided into "red," "black," and "gray" markets: the red market is legally permitted; the black market is illegal/banned; and the gray market "consists of all religious and spiritual organizations, practitioners, and activities with ambiguous legal status." More restrictive regulations produce larger gray markets; structural innovation abounds.

Religious forms also exhibit innovative outcomes born of economic interests. Fueled in whole or part by capital-generating motives, religious organizations throughout the world have ingested a business mission to accompany (or even replace) a spiritual one. The Chinese Tourism Bureau, for example, has re-envisioned temples as tourist sites, charging admission and appropriating religious space. "Some temples have successfully fended off such attempts; some have grudgingly accommodated; and some have been completely taken over" (Chau 2010, p. 10). Similar dynamics occur in highly commercialized districts such as Times Square in New York City (Tokke 2013).

Capitalism and consumption are remaking the organizational forms of religion. One product of this mentality, arguably, is megachurches, which have an ever larger presence – both physically and proportionately – on the American religious scene. Whereas niche-serving congregations may cater to the minority, megachurches stake a claim in catering to everyone. Catholic parishes, too – already much larger than the average Protestant congregation – are supersizing. A third of parishes now boast in excess of 1,200 registered households (CARA 2011). Given that size is positively related to innovativeness (Mytinger 1968; Mahler and Rogers 1999), the rise of large religious organizations predicts ever-more-innovative religious fields. That said, whether size turns out to be an explanatory or a spurious

variable in innovation (perhaps rendered non-causal once resources are accounted for) remains to be seen.

This consumer model of church may be succeeding at the moment, but two things are worth noting here. First, as institutional distrust persists across sectors, we may be coming to the end of the megachurch era. People are increasingly skeptical of consumer-oriented, pre-packaged experiences in religion or otherwise. Across society we view evidence of at least some sectors of the population privileging the small, local, niche, and handmade over the large, corporatized, homogenous consumption experience. The rise of the maker-movement, farmers' markets, food-to-table, craft brewing and online businesses like Etsy, Pinterest, and Lynda suggest that there is a sizeable part of the population that is rejecting, at least in part, the "big-box" experiences of consumption that dominated previous decades.

Scholarship about the megachurch also reminds us that just as the development of rational, market-research driven experiences led to the formation of the massive one-size-fits-all models of religion, scholars should expect the move toward the smaller and more local to have a similar impact. Smaller congregations and religious gatherings may not drive megachurches from the scene entirely, but we would be remiss to think that they would have no effect on the religious landscape as the rest of the consumer world undergoes a shift.

Diffusion

Any innovation, of course, must necessarily move from its source to its adoption in order to successfully change an organization. The *diffusion* of innovation, or how (and if) innovation actually makes meaningful and lasting change to an organization, can be as important as its introduction. An organization's size, structure, resources, strategy, and culture – alongside its external environment and constraints – will impact the ways in which any innovation is reified (Rogers 2003). Adaptation and change does not often roll out smoothly or without contestation across a religious organization. As Scheitle et al. (2010, p. 1232) note in examining religious organizations' openness to LGBT participants, organizational changes "do not diffuse evenly and unchanged throughout organizational populations."

External social and cultural circumstances, moreover, can generate "loose coupling" resulting in organizational change that is more symbolic than pragmatic (Scheitle et al. 2010; Chaves 1996). Abstract new ideas are not always realized in practical, behavioral changes. On the other hand, loose coupling may create room for innovation to diffuse through non-traditional mechanisms. Lindsay's (2010) work about a network of elite Christians, for example, shows how a lack of organizational structure worked as a catalyst to diffusing innovations. Having both institutional and anti-institutional characteristics served to legitimize an innovative approach to religion among elites, facilitating its spread into more mainstream and classically structured religious organizations.

Diffusion, moreover, may differ in mechanism and success depending upon the social source of the innovation. Entrepreneurial or other leader-driven / top-down innovations can be codified more readily through formal – even legal – arrangements, and communicated accordingly. Innovations spawned via social movements and networks, on the other hand, lack this formality but might have greater odds of continuance given wide participation among members. Polity matters, too: religious organizations with a hierarchical polity will be more likely to exercise "vertical" channels of influence (Wejnert 2002), coerced through centralization. Those with flatter polities may instead diffuse innovations via horizontal channels, through a critical mass of individuals holding similar positions. While "ideas and practices traveling through hierarchical institutionalized structures like the Catholic Church traverse clear, protected channels," those traveling through less formal structures "are more vulnerable to interference and challenge" (Levitt 2013, p. 169).

Meaningfully examining and accounting for the diffusion of innovation in religious organizations

levies yet another challenge to the very analytic categories deployed by sociologists of religion in studying religious organizations. As Levitt argues, our current vocabulary may in fact perpetuate existing hierarchies. Seeing innovation in religion means seeing religion cut across boundaries of space and imagination. Factors that influence encounters with innovation, Levitt (2013, pp. 166–69) argues, include the "social status of the carriers and the receivers," the "difference between the objects of rituals in motion and those that are already in place," the "frequency and strength of contact," the "characteristics of the pathways or channels," and "the presence of exogenous elements."

Organization scholars tell us that innovation is not complete until it has been routinized and thereby "incorporated into the regular activities of the organization," having "lost its separate identity" (Rogers 2003, p. 428). Yang (2012) suggests that even "accidental" innovations can spread infectiously, albeit in ways that are "full of challenges, twists, and turns." Variables corresponding to characteristics of the innovation, innovators, and the environmental contexts all bear substantial consequences for innovation's diffusion (Wejnert 2002). There is ample room for additional study in the prospect and process of adapting innovation in religious organizations.

Future Directions for Seeing Organizational Innovation in Religion

The study of religious organizations and innovation therein occupies a somewhat precarious position in an already fragmented subfield. Organizational scholars rarely look to the field of religion as a place for theoretical insight or empirical validation of existing theories, and religion scholars do not often spend enough time accounting for the importance of organizational structures, routines, and styles. This exists despite calls for more joint work in these fields, such as DiMaggio's (1998, p. 7) well-articulated claim:

> Because much religious activity is institutionalized and carried out through formal organizations (e.g., churches, religiously affiliated charities, religious presses, and broadcasters), students of religion may have something to learn from the experience of their colleagues in the organizations field. Because the world of religious organizations is so diverse and because many religious organizations pursue goals and employ structures quite unlike those the firms, service organizations, and public agencies on which most organizational research has focused, it is equally likely that organizational behaviorists have much to learn from students of organized religion.

Three decades since those words were published, it is still possible for us to bemoan a lack of scholarship in the field, especially as it regards innovation.

In part, this lack of attention can be directly attributed to the dominance of the church-sect paradigm discussed at the start. Nearly every one of us who teach the sociology of religion has been stumped by students who want to know if a particular religious organization qualifies as a church, sect, or cult. After some questioning and fact gathering, we can usually shoehorn the example into one of the categories, but the ensuing walk back to the office is dissatisfying. We know, deep down, that those categories are inadequate. They simply do not capture or account for the diversity of organizational forms in religion.

Perhaps even more troubling is that the categorization of all religious organizations into that narrow paradigm may be done in vain. Upon discovering that a particular group fits the characteristics of church or sect, what can possibly be done with that information? What, ultimately, do we learn? Rather than illuminating the activities of the group in question or adding dimension to the social processes under examination, categorization in this way may in fact hinder inquiry and shut down sociological conversation. What need is there to exhaustively examine all of the various organizational dynamics at work when the model should already account for them?

What we propose is a much more nuanced, contextual, and robust understanding of religious organizations, especially with regard to the sources, outcomes, and diffusion of innovation

within them. Years ago, writing in *Tricks of the Trade*, Becker (1998) implored students to stop thinking about types of people and focus instead on types of activities – the particular conditions that make some outcomes more or less likely to occur. Sociologists of religion thinking about organizations would do well to heed this advice and consider thinking less about typologies and more about the conditions that give rise to particular kinds of behavior, or increase the likelihood of particular kinds of innovation.

We know little about how innovation occurs in both standard and creative ways. While this chapter lays out a framework for how and where to look for innovation in religious organizations, it also highlights the need for more empirical evidence. For example, there is little to be found about the effects of congregational intervention efforts, pastoral/ministerial careers, cycles of growth and decline, the inevitability of organizational decline, the degree to which religious organizations' success is influenced by the economic marketplace, organizations' interface with geography in an era of mobility, or the motivations and rewards of religion entrepreneurs, to name just a few that come readily to mind. Each is crucial to understanding the dynamics of religious innovation.

As Fred Kniss (2014, p. 353) pointed out in his 2013 presidential address to the Association for the Sociology of Religion, limiting our focus to mainstream iterations of religion consequently privileges "elite religious forms and institutions" and, as such, "contribute[s] to the persistence and reproduction of dominant religious forms." So long as we continue to return to kitchens filled with prefabricated gingerbread man, heart, and star cookie cutters, the sweet products of our culinary labor will continue to look the same.

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