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## International Conference

### „Religiosity in East and West – Conceptual and Methodological Challenges”

#### Call for Papers

Organizers: Dr. Sarah Demmrich (University of Munster) & Prof. Dr. Ulrich Riegel (University of Siegen)

In Munster (Westphalia), Germany; June, 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The concept of religiosity as a highly individual aspect of religion and its research was shaped in Protestant circles in the Western context (Belzen, 2015). It inspired a huge body of research and further developments in the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion, and theology. In non-Western contexts, however, this concept has been proven only partially effective for the description and measuring of religiosity. This observation raises the question if research on religiosity is a science of Western Christianity (Cutting & Walsh 2008; Hill & Hood, 1999). Even within the Western context the present concepts and instruments are only partially applicable to measure religiosity in highly religious individuals adequately. For example, an orthodox belief, which is practiced in some Protestant Free Churches, often does not contradict with life in a modern society (Vermeer & Scheepers, 2017). This observation raises the question if the contemporary conceptualizations and operationalization of religiosity are too strongly oriented towards the ideal of an enlightened and individualized belief.

In light of these two observations, the Munster conference discusses the established concepts of religiosity and aims to expand them by alternative concepts where appropriate. For example, genuine approaches from non-Western cultures can add to the contemporary

discourse of religiosity research (e.g., concepts of Muslim or Hindu religiosity). Similarly, a new understanding of highly religious milieus, which are – against the secularization theory – growing in modern societies, can stimulate a new concept of religiosity beyond individualized belief (e.g., Fresh Expressions, Mega Churches).

Besides conceptualizing non-individualized religiosity, another challenge is the application of measures that grew out of the classic concepts of religiosity to the non-Christian and/or non-Western context (Dover, Miner, & Dowson, 2007; Ghorbani, Watson, Sarmast, & Chen, 2018). However, first approaches of religion- and culture-sensitive measures for different contexts have been developed during the last years (e.g., Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011; Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2015; Kamble, Watson, Marigoudar, & Chen, 2014; Loewenthal & Solaim, 2016; Ok, 2016). These do not only allow a more differentiated description of such religiosities, but also facilitate a valid research on its correlates. However, there has been only a few of such alternative measures of non-individualized religiosity until today and more instruments of this kind are needed which proof appropriate to various cultural contexts.

In view of the above considerations, the Munster conference wants to create an interdisciplinary scientific forum with scholars from diverse religious and cultural contexts. It aims to stimulate an international and intercultural scientific discourse on concepts and measures of individual religiosity and induce further conceptual developments in this kind of research. We, therefore, encourage scholars...

... to share both empirical insights in and theoretical reflections on non-individualized religiosity within and outside Western contexts,

... to critically assess the applicability of existing instruments in both non-Western and orthodox Western contexts, and

... to present and discuss alternative instruments to measure individual religiosity without an individualization bias

We welcome contributions with a scope on the psychology of religion, the sociology of religion as well as on theology. Additionally, we would be glad to attract scholars from different cultural backgrounds. **Please submit a paper abstract (250 – 300 words) to Sarah Demmrich (kabogan@uni-muenster.de) by January 15, 2019.** For further details on the conference, including information on registration, please check:

[https://www.uni-muenster.de/Soziologie/organisation/religiosity\\_east\\_and\\_west.shtml](https://www.uni-muenster.de/Soziologie/organisation/religiosity_east_and_west.shtml)

## Religiosity East and West: Keynote Speakers

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**Prof. Dr. Ann Taves** (USA, UC St. Barbara)

*What Counts as Religious Experience? The Inventory of Non-Ordinary Experiences as a Tool for Analysis across Cultures and Traditions*

Ann Taves is a Professor at the department of Religious Studies at University of California, Santa Barbara. In light of her interest in how people perceive experience and the conditions under which they interpret them as extra-ordinary and/or special, she became an international expert on the topic of religious experience. Prof. Taves founded the “Religion, Experience, and Mind Lab Group” in which she is currently researching what experiences count as religious or spiritual for people in the US and India.



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**Assist.-Prof. Dr. Zuhul Ağilkaya-Şahin** (Turkey, Medeniyet University)

*Introducing Turkish Measures of Religiosity*

Zuhul Ağilkaya-Şahin is an Assistant Professor at the department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance at Medeniyet University in Istanbul/Turkey. Her studies are located in the field of religion, spiritual/pastoral care, and counseling. Besides her interest in various topics of the psychology of religion, her expertise is in teaching and giving spiritual care as well as counseling.



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**Prof. Dr. Aryeh Lazar** (Israel, Ariel University)

*The challenges of religion research among Jewish (Israeli) samples*

Aryeh Lazar is an Associate Professor of psychology at the department of Behavioral Sciences at Ariel University in Israel. His research topics cover a wide range within the psychology of religion including psychological understanding of prayer, spirituality and job satisfaction, religious support and psychological well-being, religiousness, and sexual satisfaction – most in the relationship to Jewish religiousness. Therefore, Prof. Lazar became an international expert on Jewish religiousness and its correlates.



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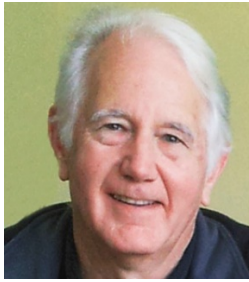
**Dr. Sabrina Müller** (Switzerland, University Zurich)

*Accountability in Christian communities in a pluralistic society*

Sabrina Müller is a postdoctoral researcher in Practical Theology at Centre for Church Development, University of Zurich and an associate lecturer in Practical Theology at Faculty of Theology. Her main research topics are life- changing religious experiences and personal transformation processes, church development, missional movements such as fresh expressions of church, ordinary theology as well as pastoral theology.

## Religiosity East and West: Public evening lecture

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**Prof. Dr. James V. Spickard** (USA, University of Redlands)

*“Thinking Beyond the West: Seeing Religions with Unaccustomed Eyes.”*

Social science was invented in the West and was shaped by Western culture. This includes its approach to religion. Scholars saw that Christians cared about people’s beliefs and about who ran their churches, so they focused on these parts of religious life. They ignored much of the rest. As a result, they had trouble understanding religions for which beliefs and church organization were less important.

Had social science arisen in other parts of the world, it would have emphasized different things. This talk explores two of these. From ancient China we get the Confucian idea of a relational self. *Lǐ*, or the ritual regard for the people who shape us, creates *dé*, or virtue. A Confucian social scientist would ask, “Who sustains the sacred relationships on which our religious communities depend?” From the traditional Navajo, we learn how rituals shape people’s inner experiences to restore their sense of the world’s beauty. A Navajo social scientist would ask, “Do rituals in other religions guide people to a sense of wholeness? If so, how?”

These non-Western ideas also have their blind spots. Even so, they let us see religion through unaccustomed eyes.

**25th June 2019, 6 – 7 pm.**  
**Lecture hall S9, 1st floor castle of Munster**

## „Religiosity in East and West – Conceptual & Methodological Challenges”

Munster (Westphalia, Germany); 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019

### *Preliminary program*

Tuesday, 25th June 2019

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1.00 p.m.	Conference opening
1.30 – 3.00	Ann Taves (University of California, USA)  <i>What Counts as Religious Experience? The Inventory of Non-Ordinary Experiences as a Tool for Analysis across Cultures and Traditions</i>
3.30 – 4.30	Collegial Session 01, Collegial Session 02
4.45 – 5.45	Collegial Session 03, Collegial Session 04
6.00 – 7.00	Public evening lecture: James V. Spickard (University of Redlands, USA): <i>Thinking Beyond the West: Seeing Religions with Unaccustomed Eyes</i> Social event (dinner in historical restaurant)

Wednesday, 26th June 2019

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9.00 – 10.30	Zuhal Ağilkaya-Şahin (Medeniyet University, Turkey) <i>Introducing Turkish Measures of Religiosity</i>
11.00 – 12.00	Collegial Session 05, Collegial Session 06
2.30 – 3.30 p.m.	Collegial Session 07, Collegial Session 08
4.00 – 5.30 p.m.	Aryeh Lazar (Ariel University, Israel) <i>The challenges of religion research among Jewish (Israeli) samples</i>
5.45 – 6.45 p.m.	Collegial Session 09, Collegial Session 10 Social event (guided tour through medieval Munster)

Thursday, 27th June 2019

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9.00 – 10.30 a.m.	Sabrina Müller (University Zürich, Switzerland) <i>Accountability in Christian communities in a pluralistic society</i>
11.00 – 12.00	Collegial Session 11, Collegial Session 12
12.15 – 12.45	Business Meeting
12.45 p.m.	Farewell to the participants and end of the conference

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