

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH METHODS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

This is the first comprehensive survey in English of research methods in the field of religious studies. It is designed to enable non-specialists and students at upper undergraduate and graduate levels to understand the variety of research methods used in the field. The aim is to create awareness of the relevant methods currently available and to stimulate an active interest in exploring unfamiliar methods, encouraging their use in research and enabling students and scholars to evaluate academic work with reference to methodological issues. A distinguished team of contributors cover a broad spectrum of topics, from research ethics, hermeneutics and interviewing, to Internet research and video-analysis. Each chapter covers practical issues and challenges, the theoretical basis of the respective method, and the way it has been used in religious studies (illustrated by case studies).

Michael Stausberg is Professor of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. He is author of *Religion and Tourism: Crossroads, Destinations and Encounters*, editor of *Contemporary Theories of Religion* and European editor of the journal *Religion*.

Steven Engler is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Mount Royal University, Canada. He is a co-editor of *Historicizing Tradition* in the *Study of Religion* and North American editor of the journal *Religion*.

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH METHODS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published in 2011

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2011 Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler for selection and editorial matter;
individual contributors, their contributions

The right of the editor to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of
the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in
any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter
invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or
retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered
trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to
infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

The Routledge handbook of research methods in the study of religion /
edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Religion—Methodology. I. Stausberg, Michael. II. Engler, Steven.

III. Title: Handbook of research methods in the study of religion.

BL41.R686 2011

200.72—dc23

2011021788

ISBN: 978-0-415-55920-1 (hbk)

Typeset in Bembo

by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

CONTENTS

[List of figures and plates](#)

[List of tables](#)

[List of boxes](#)

[List of contributors](#)

[Preface](#)

PART I

Methodology

1.1 [Introduction: Research methods in the study of religion\](#)
[Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler](#)

1.2 [Comparison](#)
[Michael Stausberg](#)

1.3 [Epistemology](#)
[Jeppe Sinding Jensen](#)

1.4 [Feminist methodologies](#)
[Mary Jo Neitz](#)

1.5 [Research design](#)
[Wade Clark Roof](#)

1.6 [Research ethics](#)
[Frederick Bird and Laurie Lamoureux Scholes](#)

PART II

Methods

2.1 [Content analysis](#)
[Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods, Jr](#)

-
- [2.2](#) [Conversation analysis](#)
[Esa Lehtinen](#)
- [2.3](#) [Discourse analysis](#)
[Titus Hjelm](#)
- [2.4](#) [Document analysis](#)
[Grace Davie and David Wyatt](#)
- [2.5](#) [Experiments](#)
[Justin L. Barrett](#)
- [2.6](#) [Facet theory methods](#)
[Erik H. Cohen](#)
- [2.7](#) [Factor analysis](#)
[Kendal C. Boyd](#)
- [2.8](#) [Field research: Participant observation](#)
[Graham Harvey](#)
- [2.9](#) [Free-listing](#)
[Michael Stausberg](#)
- [2.10](#) [Grounded theory](#)
[Steven Engler](#)
- [2.11](#) [Hermeneutics](#)
[Ingvild Sælid Gilhus](#)
- [2.12](#) [History](#)
[Jörg Rüpke](#)
- [2.13](#) [Interviewing](#)
[Anna Davidsson Bremborg](#)
- [2.14](#) [Network analysis](#)
[jimi adams](#)

- 2.15 [Phenomenology](#)
[*James V. Spickard*](#)
-
- 2.16 [Philology](#)
[*Einar Thomassen*](#)
- 2.17 [Semiotics](#)
[*Robert A. Yelle*](#)
- 2.18 [Structuralism](#)
[*Seth D. Kunin*](#)
- 2.19 [Structured observation](#)
[*Michael Stausberg*](#)
- 2.20 [Surveys and questionnaires](#)
[*Juhem Navarro-Rivera and Barry A. Kosmin*](#)
- 2.21 [Translation](#)
[*Alan Williams*](#)
- 2.22 [Videography](#)
[*Hubert Knoblauch*](#)

PART III
Materials

- 3.1 [Auditory materials](#)
[*Rosalind I.J. Hackett*](#)
- 3.2 [The Internet](#)
[*Douglas E. Cowan*](#)
- 3.3 [Material culture](#)
[*Richard M. Carp*](#)
- 3.4 [Spatial methods](#)
[*Kim Knott*](#)

LIST OF FIGURES AND PLATES

Figures

- [1.6.1 Sample flowchart of the ethical review process](#)
- [2.3.1 Macrostructure](#)
- [2.5.1 Anatomy of an experiment](#)
- [2.6.1 Sample mapping sentence 1](#)
- [2.6.2 Sample mapping sentence 2](#)
- [2.6.3 Correlation matrix for primary variables \(input matrix for SSA\)](#)
- [2.6.4 SSA of symbols of Jewish identity without regionalization](#)
- [2.6.5 SSA of symbols of Jewish identity, with preliminary regionalization](#)
- [2.6.6 SSA map of symbols with center-periphery structure](#)
- [2.6.7 Integrated SSA of symbols of Jewish identity](#)
- [2.6.8 Correlation arrays for external variables](#)
- [2.6.9 SSA of symbols of Jewish identity with sub-populations of campers by camp affiliation as external variables](#)
- [2.6.10 Representations of the profiles of the POSAC along two axes \(Torah study and freedom\) without regionalization](#)
- [2.6.11 Differentiating between profiles of campers who did and did not select Torah study as a symbol of Jewish identity](#)
- [2.6.12 POSAC differentiating between profiles of campers who did and did not select freedom as a symbol of Jewish identity](#)
- [2.6.13 Representations of the profiles of the POSAC along two axes \(Torah study and freedom\) with regionalization](#)
- [2.7.1 Scree plot of religious orientation eigenvalues, with line of random variance](#)
- [2.7.2 Religious orientation factors in varimax-rotated space](#)
- [2.10.1 Grounded theory](#)
- [2.10.2 Sample memo diagram](#)
- [2.10.3 The data/theory spectrum](#)
- [2.11.1 Varieties of the hermeneutic circle](#)
- [2.14.1 Exemplar graph](#)
- [2.14.2 Two religious organizational networks](#)
- [2.18.1 Israelite food rules](#)
- [2.18.2 Levels of underlying structure](#)
- [2.18.3 Ideal structural relations: negative, neutral and positive](#)

- [2.22.1](#) [The process of videographic analysis](#)
- [2.22.2](#) [Stills from video of a Marian apparition](#)

- [3.2.1](#) [The question matrix](#)
- [3.2.2](#) [Membership and message traffic](#)
- [3.4.1](#) [Spatial method: analytical steps](#)
- [3.5.1](#) [Religious studies and visual culture as gravitational fields of study](#)
- [3.5.2](#) [Zones of external knowledge pertaining to artifacts](#)

Plates

- [3.5.1](#) [Protestant nonconformist banner \(obverse\)](#)
- [3.5.2](#) [Protestant nonconformist banner \(back\)](#)
- [3.5.3](#) [An example of unintentional visual blasphemy](#)
- [3.5.4](#) [Daveman, *Jesus the Masochist*, from the website of 'The Christian Holocaust'](#)

LIST OF TABLES

- [2.4.1 Questions to consider when using documents](#)
- [2.4.2 Advantages and disadvantages of using unsolicited documents](#)
- [2.5.1 Assessing experimental validity](#)
- [2.5.2 Examples of experiments in the study of religion](#)
- [2.6.1 Responses of participants in Jewish summer camps to symbols of Jewish identity](#)
- [2.6.2 Sample profiles](#)
- [2.6.3 POSAC results along two axes](#)
- [2.6.4 Mirror image profiles](#)
- [2.7.1 Correlation matrix of religious orientation items](#)
- [2.7.2 Eigenvalues for the religious orientation items](#)
- [2.7.3 Religious orientation items factor structure](#)
- [2.7.4 Religious coping promax factor loadings](#)
- [2.9.1 Hypothetical item-by-item matrix](#)
- [2.13.1 Sample coding of an interview](#)
- [2.17.1 Types of sign \(after Peirce\)](#)
- [2.17.2 Example 1: analysis of magic](#)
- [2.17.3 Example 2: analysis of a folk charm](#)
- [2.17.4 Example 4: analysis of Hindu tantric mantras](#)
- [2.20.1 Sample size and margin of error according to population size with a 95 per cent confidence](#)
- [2.20.2 Datasets and existing surveys available online for analysis](#)
- [2.20.3 Useful software and tools for designing and analyzing surveys](#)
- [3.4.1 Mapping religions: case studies](#)

LIST OF BOXES

- [1.2.1 Early advocates of comparison in religious studies](#)
- [1.2.2 A comparative macro-study](#)
- [1.2.3 An ideal-typical comparative study](#)
- [1.2.4 A phenomenological comparison](#)
- [1.2.5 Costs of and problems with comparative designs](#)
- [1.2.6 Two examples of in-depth micro-studies](#)
- [1.2.7 Checklist for comparative work](#)
- [1.2.8 Purposes of comparative designs](#)
- [1.4.1 Descriptive characteristics of standpoint methodology](#)
- [1.4.2 Comparison across feminist methodologies](#)
- [1.4.3 Maintaining a diverse discourse](#)
- [1.5.1 Representational moments in fieldwork](#)
- [1.6.1 Ethical concerns in research](#)
- [1.6.2 Three general ethical principles of religious research](#)
- [1.6.3 Respecting the dignity and integrity of others](#)
- [1.6.4 Communicating honestly and objectively with our subjects and audiences](#)
- [1.6.5 Responsibly exercising judgement](#)
- [1.6.6 Nuremberg Code \(1947–49\)](#)
- [1.6.7 Belmont Report \(USA, 1979\)](#)
- [1.6.8 Research ethics framework, Economic and Social Research Council \(ESRC\) \(UK, 2005\)](#)
- [1.6.9 Selected professional organizations that offer research ethics protocols for research involving human subjects](#)
- [2.1.1 Functions of content analysis](#)
- [2.1.2 Units that can be counted in content analysis](#)
- [2.1.3 Basic steps of content analysis](#)
- [2.1.4 Advantages and limitations of content analysis](#)
- [2.2.1 Extract 1: Mormon proselytizing](#)
- [2.2.2 Extract 2: Seventh-day Adventist Bible study](#)
- [2.2.3 Steps to take in conversation analytical research](#)
- [2.2.4 Transcription symbols](#)
- [2.3.1 The constructive effects of discourse](#)
- [2.6.1 When is facet theory applicable for studies of religion?](#)
- [2.6.2 Scope of facet theory](#)

- [2.6.3 Steps in conducting a Smallest Space Analysis \(SSA\)](#)
- [2.8.1 Stages in the fieldwork process](#)
- [2.8.2 Key skills for fieldwork](#)
- [2.9.1 A study of Zoroastrian priests](#)
- [2.9.2 Additional variations and prompting techniques](#)
- [2.10.1 An example of open coding](#)
- [2.10.2 Sample memos](#)
- [2.10.3 Elements of grounded theory method](#)
- [2.15.1 Four steps in phenomenological method](#)
- [2.16.1 An example of textual criticism](#)
- [2.16.2 'Manuscript' and 'text'](#)
- [2.19.1 Typical stages and steps of structured observation](#)
- [2.19.2 The observation protocol](#)
- [2.21.1 Questions raised by translation](#)
- [2.21.2 Some models of translation](#)
- [3.1.1 Reasons for lack of research on sound production/perception](#)
- [3.2.1 Questions to ask in Internet research](#)
- [3.2.2 Assessing online participation](#)
- [3.3.1 Religion and the history of technology](#)
- [3.3.2 Systematic questioning as method](#)
- [3.3.3 Body methods in the study of religion](#)
- [3.3.4 Behavioral approach to *k lam* of South Asia](#)
- [3.3.5 Cultural landscape and religion in Indianapolis](#)
- [3.3.6 Lineage](#)
- [3.3.7 A checklist for methods in religion and material culture](#)
- [3.5.1 Graffiti as visual culture](#)
- [3.5.2 Disciplinary analysis of a Protestant nonconformist banner](#)
- [3.5.3 *The Angel of the North* \(Antony Gormley, 1994–98\)](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

jimi adams is Assistant Professor, School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, USA. His main areas of work are social networks and the diffusion of ideas/diseases. His work has been published in *Social Networks*; *Field Methods*; *Demographic Research* and the *Handbook of Medical Sociology*.

Justin L. Barrett is Thrive Chair of Applied Developmental Psychology and Professor of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and Research Associate of the University of Oxford's Centre for Anthropology and Mind. He works in the areas of cognitive anthropology, cognitive science of religion, psychology of religion, and cognitive, religious and character development. Major publications include *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (2004); *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology* (2011) and *Born Believers* (2011). He is book review editor of the *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, a consulting editor of *Psychology of Religion & Spirituality* and an editorial board member of *Religion, Brain, and Behavior*.

Frederick Bird is Research Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. He is also a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Concordia University in Montréal, Québec, Canada, where he was a professor in the Department of Religion and held the Concordia University Research Chair in Comparative Ethics. His publications include *Voices from the Voluntary Sector: perspectives on leadership challenges* (co-edited with Frances Westley, 2010); *Just Business: practices in a diverse and developing world* (co-edited with Manuel Velasquez, 2006); *International Business and the Dilemmas of Development* (co-edited with Emmanuel Raufflet and Joseph Smucker, 2005); *International Businesses and the Challenges of Poverty in the Developing World* (co-edited with Stewart W. Herman, 2004); *Ritual and Ethnic Identity: a comparative study of liturgical ritual in synagogues* (co-authored with Jack N. Lightstone *et al.*, 1996). For a number of years he chaired the university's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Kendal C. Boyd is Associate Professor of Psychology at Loma Linda University, USA. His research areas include medically unexplained symptoms, chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, sports fan dynamics, the psychology of religion, and statistics/methodology. In addition to his dissertation being a Monte Carlo study on the number of factors criteria in exploratory factor analysis, he has published factor analytic studies in the area of medically unexplained symptoms. He is a clinical psychologist who also holds an MA in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He recently authored a chapter in the edited volume *A Christian Worldview and Mental Health: Adventist perspectives*.

Anna Davidsson Bremborg (PhD Lund University, Sweden), is a sociologist of religion. Her major areas of research are death studies and pilgrimages. She has published two books: *Yrk*

begravningsentreprenör [Occupation: funeral director] (2002) and *Pilgrimsvandring på svenska* [Pilgrimages, the Swedish way] (2010). She has published articles in several edited books and journals such as the *Journal of Empirical Theology*, *Mortality* and *Social Compass*.

Richard M. Carp is Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academics at St. Mary's College of California. He works in the interstices of the academic study of religion, performance, semiotics, anthropology and visual art and design, as well as theory and method of interdisciplinarity. He is the director and editor of *The Image Bank for Teaching World Religion* (1992). He has published in various edited volumes and journals including *Teaching Theology and Religion*, *Issues in Integrative Studies* and *Historical Reflections/Réflexions historiques*. With Rebecca Sachs Norris he is editor of *Studies in Body and Religion: a series*.

Erik H. Cohen is Associate Professor of Sociology at the School of Education, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel. His main areas of work are Jewish identity, youth culture, tourism and migration, and Foucault Theory research methodology. He is the author of *Youth Tourism to Israel: educational experiences of the diaspora* (2008). His work has been published in *Religion*, *Current Sociology* and *Annals of Tourism Research*. He is the co-founder and editor of the *International Journal of Jewish Education and Research*.

Douglas E. Cowan is Professor of Religious Studies at Renison University College, the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, Canada. His current areas of interest include religion and film, religion and popular culture, and religion and technology. His major publications include *Sacred Space: The Quest for Transcendence in Science Fiction Film and Television* (2010); *Sacred Terror: religion and horror on the silver screen* (2008); *Cults and New Religions: a brief history* (with David G. Bromley, 2008) and *Cyberhenge: modern Pagans on the Internet* (2005). He is formerly a co-general editor of *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* and is currently the New Religions Movements section editor for *Religion Compass*.

Grace Davie is Professor emerita in the Sociology of Religion in the University of Exeter (UK). Her work is principally concerned with the changing place of religion in European and other societies, and the pressing need for new ways of working in the social sciences in order to understand this. She is the author of *Religion in Britain since 1945* (1994); *Religion in Modern Europe* (2000); *Europe: the exceptional case* (2002); *The Sociology of Religion* (Sage 2007). She is co-author of *Religion in America, Secular Europe* (2008), and co-editor of *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe* (2 vols; 2010 and 2011).

Steven Engler is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Mount Royal University and Affiliated Associate Professor of Religion at Concordia University, Canada. He works on religion in Brazil and the theory of religion. He is co-editor (with Gregory Price Grieve) of *Historicizing 'Tradition' in the Study of Religion* (2005). He is North American editor of the journal *Religion*, co-edits the book series *Studies in the History of Religions* and edits the book series *Key Thinkers in the Study of Religion*. He has recent and forthcoming articles (some co-authored with Mark Q. Gardiner) in *Journal of Ritual Studies*, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, *Numen*, *Religion*, *Religious Studies*, *Revista de Estudos da Religião (Rever)* and *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*.

Ingvild Sælid Gilhus is Professor of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. She works in the areas of religions in late antiquity and new religious movements. Main publications include *Laughing*

Gods, Weeping Virgins : laughter in the history of religions (1997) and *Animals, Gods and Humans changing attitudes to animals in Greek, Roman and early Christian ideas* (2006). She is book review editor of *Numen* and is editorial board member of *Temenos*.

Rosalind I.J. Hackett is Professor and Head of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, USA. In 2010 she was re-elected President of the International Association for the History of Religions (until 2015). She has published widely on religion in Africa, notably on new religious movements, and religion and conflict in Nigeria. Her most recent books are (as editor) *Proselytization Revisited: rights talk, free markets, and culture wars* (2008) and *Displacing the State: religion and conflict in a neoliberal Africa* (co-edited with James H. Smith, 2011). She serves on numerous editorial boards, such as *Religion, Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Culture and Religion* and the *Journal of Religion in Africa*.

Graham Harvey is Reader in Religious Studies, The Open University, UK. His research interests are primarily in the lived realities and performances of contemporary Paganisms and indigenous religions, but he has also researched ancient Jewish textual issues. His edited publications include *Religions in Focus: new approaches to tradition and contemporary practices* (2009). He is the author of *Listening People, Speaking Earth: contemporary Paganism* (2nd edn 2006) and *Animism respecting the living world* (2005). He is co-editor of the *Vitality of Indigenous Religions* series.

John Harvey is Professor of Art and Director of the Centre for Studies in the Visual Culture of Religion, The School of Art, Aberystwyth University, UK. He is an historian of art and visual culture and a practitioner in visual and sonic fine art. His research field is the visual culture of religion. He has written several books including *Photography & Spirit* (2007); *The Appearance of Evil: apparitions of spirits in Wales* (2003); *Image of the Invisible: the visualization of religion in the Welsh Nonconformist tradition* (1999); and *The Art of Piety: the visual culture of Welsh Nonconformity* (1995). His art practice is represented in *The Pictorial Bible* (2000, 2007, 2011), and *The Aural Bible* (2011) series of exhibitions, performances and texts. He is a member of the editorial board for the journal of *Biblical Reception* (2010).

Titus Hjelm is Lecturer in Finnish Society and Culture at University College London, UK. His main areas of expertise are cultural sociology, sociology of religion, social problems, social theory, media and popular culture. His research focuses on the role of minority religions in contemporary societies and the media treatment of alternative religion. He is editor of *Religion and Social Problems* (2011) and co-editor of the *Journal of Religion in Europe*. He has published several books in Finnish and articles in journals such as *Social Compass* and *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.

Jeppe Sinding Jensen is Associate Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion, Associate Researcher, at MIND lab, and co-ordinator in the research unit Religion, Cognition and Culture, all at Aarhus University, Denmark. Current main areas of interest include the philosophy of science for the study of religion and culture, post-analytic philosophy and semantics, theories of narrative and discourse, the relations between cognition and culture, cultural and moral psychology, and method and theory in the study of religion. Major book publications include: *Rationality and the Study of Religion* (ed. with Luther H. Martin 2003), *The Study of Religion in a New Key* (2003), *Myths and Mythologies: a reader* (2009). Forthcoming is *Meaning – in religion, cognition and culture*. He is an editorial board member of *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* and editor of the book series *Religion, Cognition, and Culture*.

Hubert Knoblauch is professor of General Sociology at the Technical University of Berlin, Germany. His main areas of work are the sociology of knowledge, communication and religion. His books and selected articles include *Populäre Religion* [Popular Religion] 2009; *Visual Analysis: new developments in the interpretative analysis of video and photography* (co-edited with Alejandro Baer, Eric Laurier, Sabina Peterschke and Bernt Schnettler, a special issue of *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 3 (2008)); *Video Analysis: methodology and methods – qualitative audiovisual data analysis in sociology* (co-edited with Bernt Schnettler, Jürgen Raab and Hans-Georg Soeffner 2006; 2nd edn 2009); *Qualitative Methoden der Religionsforschung* [Qualitative Methods in Religious Studies] 2008; *Religionssoziologie* [Sociology of Religion] 1999.

Kim Knott is Professor of Religious Studies at Lancaster University, UK, and until recently was Director of a major UK research programme on ‘Diasporas, Migration and Identities’. She works in the fields of religion, space and place, and religion and public life, and, with Elizabeth Poole and Teemu Taira, is completing a book on *Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred*. Her books include *Diasporas: concepts, intersections, identities* (ed. with Seán McLoughlin, 2010), *The Location of Religion: a spatial analysis* (2005), and *Hinduism: a very short introduction* (2000). She is on the editorial boards of *Religion*, *South Asian Diasporas* and *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.

Barry A. Kosmin is Research Professor in the Public Policy and Law Program at Trinity College, USA, and Founding Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. He is a sociologist and has been a principal investigator of the American Religious Identification Survey series since its inception in 1990 as well as national social surveys in Europe, Africa and Asia. His publications include *One Nation Under God: religion in contemporary American society* (1993) and *Religion in a Free Market* (2006). He is a former joint editor of the journal *Patterns of Prejudice*.

Seth D. Kunin is Professor in the Anthropology of Religion and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Arts and Humanities) at Durham University, UK. His main areas of work are Neo-Structuralism, identity, crypto-Judaism (particularly in New Mexico) and biblical and rabbinic myth and ritual. His major publications include *Juggling Identities* (2010), *We Think What We Eat* (2004), *Religion: the modern theories* (2003) and *The Logic of Incest* (1995). His work has been published in journals such as *Religion*, *Temenos* and *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*.

Esa Lehtinen is Professor of Modern Finnish at the University of Vaasa, Finland. He has conducted research on spoken interaction in religious, medical and organizational settings. He has published in various journals, e.g. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Human Studies*, *Religion*, *Sociology of Health & Illness* and *Text*.

Juhem Navarro-Rivera is a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture in Trinity College and adjunct professor of Latino Studies at the Puerto Rican and Latin American Studies Institute at the University of Connecticut, USA. A political scientist, he has worked on surveys and designed questionnaires for research in Puerto Rico and the USA on political behavior, public health and religious identification. His publications include chapters in *New Drugs on the Street: changing patterns of illicit consumption* (2005) and *Secularism and Science in the 21st Century* (2008) and articles in the *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse* and *Human Organization*. He is the main analyst of the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey.

Mary Jo Neitz is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Missouri, USA. She is a sociologist of religion and culture with interests in methodology, gender and sexuality. She

interested in changing religious practices of ordinary people in relation to religious institutions and the dynamics of global changes. She is the author of *Sociology on Culture* (with John Hall and Marshall Battani, 2003); *Culture: Sociological Perspectives* (with John Hall, 1993; Chinese edition 2002); *Charisma and Community: a study of religious commitment within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* (1987); *Feminist Narratives and the Sociology of Religion* (ed. with Nancy Nason-Clarke, 2001) and *Sex, Lies and Sanctity: religion and deviance in contemporary North America* (ed. with Marion S. Goldman, 1995).

Chad Nelson holds an MA in Communication from Spring Arbor University, USA. His research interests include co-cultures and intercultural communication.

Wade Clark Roof is J.F. Rowny Professor of Religion and Society at the University of California Santa Barbara, USA, and Director of the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion and Public Life. A sociologist of religion, his interests currently focus upon the challenges of global religious pluralism and progressive change in American religion. His books include *American Mainline Religion* (with William McKinney, 1987), *A Generation of Seekers* (1994), *Spirituality Marketplace* (1999), and *Bridging Divided Worlds* (with Jackson W. Carroll, 2002); he is co-editing (with Mark Juergensmeyer) a three-volume *Encyclopedia of Global Religions*.

Jörg Rüpke is Fellow for the History of Religion at the Max Weber Centre, University of Erfurt, Germany, and co-director of the research group 'Religious individualization in historical perspective'. His work focuses on the ancient Mediterranean, in particular Roman religion and the history of scholarship. His books include *Religion of the Romans* (2001); *Fasti sacerdotum: a prosopography of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian religious officials in the city of Rome* (2005); *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine: time, history, and the fasti* (2011); *Rationalization and Religious Change in Republican Rome* (forthcoming). He is co-editor of the journal *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*.

Laurie Lamoureux Scholes is a PhD candidate in the Department of Religion at Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. Using primarily qualitative research techniques, her doctoral research explores social responses to interfaith encounters and exchanges in Canada. She teaches fieldwork research techniques to undergraduates in religion.

James V. Spickard is Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Redlands, California, where he teaches Research Methods, Social Theory, and the Sociology of Religion. He has published extensively on such topics as sociological theory and methods, the sociology of religious experience, ritual, human rights, globalization and religious social activism. He is the senior editor of *Personal Knowledge and Beyond* (2002) and the co-editor of *Religion Crossing Boundaries* (2010).

Michael Stausberg is Professor of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. He is the author of *Religion and Tourism* (2011) and *Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism* (2008). His edited work in English includes *Contemporary Theories of Religion* (2009), *Theorizing Rituals* (with Jens Kreinath and Jan Snoek, 2 vols, 2006–07), and *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (2004). He is the European editor of the journal *Religion* and co-edits the book series *Religion and Reason* and *Critical Studies in Religion/Religionswissenschaft*.

Einar Thomassen is Professor of Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. His special area of research is Gnosticism and Nag Hammadi, but he has also published and regularly teaches on the

religions of classical antiquity and the Near East, early Christianity, aspects of Islam, and methodological and comparative issues. His books include *Le Traité Tripartite* (with Louis Painchaud, 1989), *The Spiritual Seed: the church of the 'Valentinians'* (2006), *L'Interprétation de la gnose* (with Wolf-Peter Funk and Louis Painchaud, 2010), and he edited or co-edited *The Letters of Ahmad b. Idn* (1993), *The World of Ancient Magic* (1999) and *Canon and Canonicity: essays on the formation and use of scripture* (2010). He was editor of *Numen* 2000–08 and now edits the *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* book series.

Alan Williams is Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion and Chair of the Department of Religions and Theology, in the School of Arts Histories and Cultures at the University of Manchester, UK. He is a specialist in Iranian languages, religions and literature, and has a more general interest in comparative literature, translation theory and poetics. Main publications (and including translations) are *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (1990); *Spiritual Verses: the first book of the Masnavi-ye Ma'navi of Jalāloddin Rumi* (2006); *In the Mirror of the Stream (Dar Āyin-ye Rud)* (2008); *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora* (2009). He is the co-editor (with John R. Hinnells) of *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (2007). He is on the editorial board of the *Mevlana Rumi Review*.

Robert H. Woods, Jr is Associate Professor of Communication at Spring Arbor University, Spring Arbor, Michigan, USA, where he teaches media ethics and research in the graduate programme. He is co-editor of *Understanding Evangelical Media: the changing face of Christian communication* (2008) and *The Message in the Music: studying contemporary praise and worship* (2007); he is co-author of *Prophetically Incorrect: A Christian Introduction to Media Criticism* (2010). He has published articles in the *Review of Religious Research*, *Journal of Media and Religion*, *Christian Scholarship Review* and *Christian Higher Education*. He is the former President of the Religious Communication Association.

David Wyatt is a PhD student at Egenis, the ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society at the University of Exeter, UK. His doctorate considers the role and use of science in everyday police practice. He has a broad interest in cultural sociology, including the sociology of religion, and qualitative research methods.

Robert A. Yelle is Assistant Professor in the Department of History and the Helen Hardin Honors Program at the University of Memphis, USA. His main areas of research are the semiotics of religion, secularization, law and religion, classical Hinduism and British Protestantism. He is the author of *Explaining Mantras: ritual, rhetoric, and the dream of a natural language in Hindu tantra* (2003) and the co-editor, with Winnifred Sullivan and Mateo Taussig-Rubbo, of *After Secular Law* (2011). He is on the editorial board of *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*.

PREFACE

Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler

Why this book?

The introductory essay explains why we think that research methods and methodologies are crucial for the future of the study of religion\'. We find it symptomatic of the state of affairs in our discipline that this *Handbook* is the first volume on research methods in the study of religion\' ever published in English. In the introduction we suggest some hypothetical explanations for this curious and embarrassing neglect.

When faculty at one of our departments (Stausberg's) decided to split the customary graduate-level theory and methods course into two separate courses, the lack of relevant literature in English became obvious. (Fortunately, two colleagues had just edited a volume in Norwegian.) One of the aims of this particular course on research methods is to help students to prepare the ground for their research dissertations (which play a relatively great role in the Norwegian graduate programmes). We hope that the present volume will stimulate the development of similar courses.

Neither of the editors can, nor wishes to, claim to have started this editorial project as an expert in methodological affairs, but preparing this volume has definitely helped us to improve and we have learned a lot. We are grateful to all contributors for sharing their expertise and for their patience in dealing with our various queries and requests for revision, which were typically meant to make technical points clearer to novices (like ourselves). We now hope that others, not least graduate students, will take part in this learning process. We sincerely feel that this may indeed be of critical importance for the further development of our discipline.

Neither of us had the benefit of extensive training in research methods as part of our education in the study of religion\'. In that sense, our own careers are symptomatic of the lack that this volume is meant to begin to address. In other ways, our backgrounds are somewhat atypical. We share an interest in the suspect domains of theory and metatheory, be it theories of religion, theories of ritual, or the importance of philosophies of language and meaning for the study of religion\'. At the same time, we belong to an even more exotic sub-species: theoreticians who are also committed to empirical research. We also share six more specific characteristics. We do historical and field-based work. We work on early modern European religious history and on non-European religions (Zoroastrianism in India and Iran; spirit-possession religions in Brazil). We are concerned with the importance of theoretical models in the study of these religions. We find ourselves traversing boundaries between the histories of specific religions, the history of studies of these religions and the study of religion\' in general (including its theoretical legacies). We both enjoy navigating academic discourses in different languages—a tendency reflected in the multinational authorship of this book. Last, but not least, as v

explain in our joint introduction, we believe that methods mark the middle ground between theory and 'data'—and so our exploring methods in greater detail seemed a natural step. In addition, we both have experience with the collegial give-and-take that is involved in co-editing and co-authoring, including our having previously engaged in both these activities together.

Our own standpoint can be described as collaborative, critical, reflexive and reasonably conservative though open-minded. We have, of course, not engaged personally in more than a handful of the methods represented in this book; so far, for example, neither of us has done experimental work nor conducted engaged, committed or activist research, though we see value in both approaches. As scholars of religion we wish to retain a certain distance from religious discourses, but we are aware that the scholarly and the non-scholarly discourses are densely interwoven and that (we as) scholars of religion are not only observers but invariably actors on the religious field; moreover we don't indulge ourselves in the illusion that our views are any less ideological or value-free than those of others.

If some methods are not covered in the present *Handbook*, this is not because we wanted to create a canon and exclude other options. The inevitable lacunae are the result of a combination of our own limited perspectives, constraints on space and time, and our inability to find authors in cases where we would have liked to include additional chapters. To our eyes, there are no inherently good or bad methods or methodologies, but there are better or worse options relative to given theoretical stances, research questions and sources. Even if there are no inherently good or bad methods, there are differences in quality and productivity when methods are actually put to use—and we hope that this *Handbook* will help to improve these and to stimulate creativity in the discipline. We believe also that it is important to choose theoretical stances in an informed manner and to be critical and reflexive towards these. We envision scholarship that is transparent in method, dense in theory, rich in data, and clear in presentation/writing.

Work on this *Handbook* went off surprisingly smoothly. Apart from a single chapter that did not materialize, all the authors delivered their pieces on time or within reasonable limits, and all were very tolerant with our suggested editorial changes. Their collective collaboration is more than just greatly appreciated. Our editorial efforts established a plan and laid a foundation, but their work makes up the edifice that you see before you.

Michael Stausberg
Steven Englund

Methodology

INTRODUCTION

Research methods in the study of religion\

Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler

It is generally agreed that **methods**, together with **theories**, **concepts** and **categories**,¹ are foundational for modern science: knowledge accepted as ‘scientific’ must be based on empirical materials (**data**) gathered by using methods that are accepted as ‘scientific’, and their analysis must proceed following rules based on ‘scientific’ methods by engaging concepts and theories accepted by the respective academic community. Scholars’ dreams, for example, are not accepted as scientific data; allegorical interpretation of such dreams is not accepted as a scientific method; illumination is not generally accepted as a scientific category; and astrology is not accepted as a scientific theory.² Of course, rules for what qualifies as scientific data, methods, categories and theories are subject to change. The discussions and critiques that motivate such change are a basic task of scholarship. In addition, scientific data, findings and theories are constantly challenged by non-scholars. Conversely, the borderlines between what is science and what is non-science, or pseudo-science, are matters of ongoing debate and negotiation.

The past decades have seen vivid debates about conceptual and theoretical issues in the study of religion\'. The very concept of ‘religion’ has been challenged as a valid theoretical category. Feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, philosophy of language, evolutionary theory, the cognitive sciences and other intellectual developments have raised a number of epistemological, semantic and methodological issues (i.e. questions regarding the nature of knowledge construction, foundations and production of knowledge and meaning); there has been a wave of new theories of religion (Stausberg 2009). So far, however, these debates have remained curiously distant from issues of methodology.

The neglect of method in the study of religion

Issues of research methods are seldom addressed at conferences. Very few articles on methods have been published by leading journals, even in the one that has ‘method’ in its title.³ Methods are rarely discussed in introductory textbooks⁴ and separate courses on research methods are seldom included in religious studies programs.⁵ In this respect, the study of religion\ stands in marked contrast to other disciplines, which put great emphasis on training in research methods—often in the first year—and which have a strong record of published work on methods, including journal articles, handbooks and specialist volumes. There are no discussions in the study of religion\ that can compete with the level of technical sophistication established in many other disciplines.⁶ The present volume is intended as

significant step toward putting research methods more firmly on the agenda of the study of religion, especially for graduate students.

There are several reasons for the general neglect of research methods in the study of religion. A major one is the fragmentary situation of our research landscape, in which some scholars learn textual methods while others become familiar with qualitative social inquiry as part of their training. This relates to the often-heard claim that the study of religion is different from other disciplines because it has no research methods of its own. The fact that the field has no *sui generis* methods is true, and obviously so: almost no discipline does. The analysis of compositions in music comes to mind as a distinct method, but even the study of music uses a range of common methods such as historiography and source criticism or fieldwork. All academic disciplines use a wide variety of methods, most of which they share with others. Fieldwork has never been the exclusive domain of anthropology, and sociologists are not the only scholars who conduct surveys. It is therefore a misconception to think that the study of religion is significantly different from other disciplines in its use of a variety of methods; what is different is the scarcity of explicit reflection on methods in the study of religion.

Conversely, one often hears that the study of religion is a multi- or pluri-methodological discipline. Again, this amounts to merely stating the obvious. How could it be otherwise? Given the complex nature of most of the things, facts or affairs that are studied in the humanities and the social sciences, there simply are no disciplines that could afford to rely on one method only. There is, in fact, a general consensus (at least outside of the study of religion) that different methods should, where possible, be combined in order to achieve stronger results. A multi- or pluri-methodological approach is far from an anomaly. What is anomalous is the implicit conclusion derived from this insight, namely that issues of methods do not require attention (because there is no one method anyway). Actually, unless one mistakenly identifies **methodological pluralism** with methodological *laissez-faire* and dilettantism or with the belief that all methods are equally good for all purposes, one would anticipate precisely the opposite conclusion: that the challenge of having to work with and train students in a variety of different research methods requires substantial and explicit attention and commitment to issues of research methods. Given the nature of the discipline of the study of religion, then, we would expect to find a deep and abiding interest in training students in methodology, in refining research methods and in methodological creativity. This is clearly not the case. Rather, method use in the study of religion continues to be relatively unsophisticated and surprisingly uniform. It is time for this to change. For a relatively well-established discipline such as the study of religion, it is more than a little embarrassing that the present volume appears to be the first handbook of research methods ever published in English.⁷

Methods

As indicated above, the present volume starts from the basic assumption that methods are the rules of the game in scholarly work. Resonating the Greek etymology of the word (from *meta* ‘after’ and *odos* ‘way’), the concept is understood here as a metaphor to refer to a (planned) ‘way’, a specific way of doing things, an organized procedure. A scientific method, in very broad terms, is the generally accepted mode of procedure in the sciences in a broader sense (including the humanities). In the light of theories, methods construct, collect and/or generate the data for scholarly work. Data are not simply ‘out there’, independent of the observer and the observation. There are no data without methods and theories. Methods help us to analyze reality but, at the same time, they, in part, produce the data that are to be analyzed. In that sense, by partially producing the realities they then go about to analyze, methods are performative (Law 2004: 143). Methods, and the concepts that inform them and describe them, also have a history, changing across scholarly generations (see Platt 1999: 44–52). The goal of

this volume is to give a sense of current methods and discussions of method in the study of religion's. It is clear that some methods are more helpful than others (for given purposes and within given contexts), that different types of scholarly work make more productive use of some methods than others, and that all methods impose limited perspectives and select empirical materials (data). The obvious facts, however, do not make methods dispensable, for there is no scholarly (or scientific) work without method(s). This should not be misunderstood as saying that there is one special method that guarantees success, that following a method guarantees success, that methods are beyond critique or that established scientific methods are the only way of obtaining relevant knowledge (though scientific methods are the only generally recognized way of obtaining *scientific* knowledge). Methods are not a straitjacket; they allow for creativity and new vision. Not everything can be planned out, of course, and not every plan can be put into practice. In fact, scholarly work is often steered more by external constraints, by improvisation and by *bricolage* than by a master plan. While methodological competence will yield solid work, brilliant work is often the result of serendipity. Creative scholarly work does not go against method, but creatively uses methods; as all good tools, methods are refined in use: some wear out and are replaced by others; some are broadened or reoriented in light of their limitations or when facing the threat of perceived methodological hegemony or imperialism (Larson, 2004).

In a formal sense, research methods are techniques for collecting and analyzing, or enacting (Larson, 2004) data in scientific or scholarly research. While there is always some degree of improvisation, these procedures or techniques typically follow a plan, a routine or a scheme. These established procedures should not be misunderstood as immutable laws, but as guidelines and examples of established or best practice (which is not to deny the dynamism of practices). Accordingly, the present volume does not intend to regulate or standardize research practice in the study of religion's but to improve research and to stimulate its further development by providing reflection and suggesting alternatives.

Some key methodological issues

The application and discussion of the underlying principles of these procedures is called methodology. **Methodology** refers both to general technical issues regarding methods (i.e., case or sample selection, data collection and analysis), and to the theory and conceptualization of methods. We will address each of these in turn.

Research design

The first, technical sense of 'methodology' incorporates several issues: e.g. research design; relations and tensions between qualitative and quantitative methods; selection of methods; and means of validating results, including the use of different methods in conjunction.

Research design is covered in a separate chapter in this volume (see [Chapter 1.5](#)). Here we will confine ourselves to listing some of the basic steps involved in effective research design.⁸

- Identifying the core research question or problem and the series of specific questions and hypotheses that will investigate, support or elaborate that core issue (What is the goal of the study? What lacuna is it meant to fill? What motivates the desire to generate knowledge on this particular issue? What more specific issues will serve as stepping stones to generating this knowledge?).
- Reviewing the relevant literature (What has been published that is comparable in terms

sample content of The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion
(Routledge Handbooks)

- [Politics and Society in Ancient Greece \(Praeger Series on the Ancient World\) here](#)
- [read online Java Programming for Android Developers for Dummies here](#)
- [The Shia - The Real Followers of The Sunnah here](#)
- [To Dream Again pdf](#)

- <http://dadhoc.com/lib/Praying-for-Gil-Hodges--A-Memoir-of-the-1955-World-Series-and-One-Family-s-Love-of-the-Brooklyn-Dodgers.pdf>
- <http://weddingcellist.com/lib/LSD-25---Tryptamine-Syntheses-Overview---Reference.pdf>
- <http://jaythebody.com/freebooks/The-Shia---The-Real-Followers-of-The-Sunnah.pdf>
- <http://rodrigocaporal.com/library/All-the-Pretty-Lies.pdf>