HOW TO STUDY CONGREGATIONS

Resource List

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IN THE NEWS

[Exploring the Big Question: What Is Ecclesiastical Imagination?](#) by Rev. Dr. Gordon Mikoski, Principal Investigator, Imagining Church Project: Thriving Congregations Initiative through Lilly Endowment, Inc. Professor Mikoski discusses imagination as a philosophical, theological, and anthropological phenomenon.

[Introduction to Digital Ethnography Lecture](#) by Rev. Dr Erin Raffety

[Understanding Congregations Through Digital Ethnography](#) by Rev. Dr. Erin Raffety, Empirical Research Consultant, Imagining Church Project: Thriving Congregations Initiative through Lilly Endowment, Inc.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR STUDYING CONGREGATIONS

[American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS)](#) - ARIS 2008 is the third in a landmark time series of large, nationally representative surveys that track changes in the religious loyalties of the U.S. adult population within the 48 contiguous states from 1990 to 2008.

[Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA)](#) provides free access to quality data on religion, recent findings and new research tools.

[Digital Ethnography Centre (DERC)](#) - applies cutting-edge ethnographic approaches to better understand how digital technology impacts our present lives and potential futures.

[Faith and Leadership](#) - a learning resource for Christian leaders and their institutions from Leadership Education at Duke Divinity.

[Gallup Religion News](#) is a global analytics and advice firm that helps leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems.

[Hartford Institute for Religion Research](#) - information on all their research; megachurch, U.S. mosques, and nondenominational churches.

[Faith Communities Today Research (FACT)](#) - a multifaith research coalition conducting surveys and practical reports on congregations and congregational life in the U.S.

[International Society for Empirical Research in Theology (ISERT)](#) - promotes networking and activities to implement the application of empirical methods and approaches in theology and religious studies. They welcome and encourage all those who apply such research methods to meet in this virtual forum, to learn about past and ongoing projects, and to share current ideas and developments.

Lilly Endowment, Inc. - a private philanthropic foundation based in Indianapolis, IN. The endowment was created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr and his sons, Eli and J.K. Jr., through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business. In keeping with the founder's wishes, the foundation supports community development, education and religion.

National Council of Churches (NCC) Since 1950, has served as a leading voice of witness to the living Christ with a diverse covenant community of 38-member communions and over 40 million individuals, it advocates and represents God's love and promise of unity in our public square. NCC partners with secular and interfaith partners to advance a shared agenda of peace, progress, and positive change.

National Congregations Study (NCS) at Duke University - A representative sample of America's churches, synagogues, mosques and other local places of worship, based on in-depth interviews with congregational leaders in 1998, 2006-07, 2012, and 2018-19. It gathers information about worship, programs, staffing, community activities, demographics, and many other characteristics of American congregations.

Pew Research Center - Religious Landscape Study (RLS) - the RLS surveys more than 35,000 Americans from all 50 states about their religious affiliations, beliefs and practices, and social and political views.

Religious Research Association (RRA) To increase understanding of the function of religion in persons and society through application of social scientific and other scholarly methods; promote the circulation, interpretation and use of the findings of religious research among religious bodies and other interested groups; cooperate with other professional societies, groups and individuals interested in the study of religion; and aid in the professional development of religious researchers.

Situated Immersion: Reimagining Remote Methods by Jordan Kraemer. How can situated immersion be a resource rather than a barrier to ethnographic knowing?

Strategies for Doing Church Online by Heidi A. Campbell

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) - an interdisciplinary academic association that stimulates, promotes, and communicates social scientific research about religious institutions and experiences and was founded at Harvard University in 1949. Today SSSR fosters interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration among more than a thousand scholars from sociology, religious studies, psychology, political science, economics, international studies, gender studies, and many other fields. The Society's flagship publication, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, is the most cited resource in the field and their annual meetings bring together leading scholars in the social and behavioral scientific study of religion.

Thriving Rural Communities Duke Divinity School works to foster thriving rural North Carolina communities by cultivating faithful rural Christian leadership and fruitful rural United Methodist congregations.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHURCHES

[Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Innovation Amidst and Beyond COVID-19](#) is a 5-year research project funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and led by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. The focus of this expansive initiative is to research, collect, and disseminate data about the possible changes and long-term implications the pandemic might have on religious life across the U.S. Through this centralized online hub, congregational and denominational leaders, religious scholars, and the general public will have free access to a growing repository of curated resources, practical tools, and guidance—drawn from our own research and from our cross-denominational partners.

[Navigating the Pandemic: A First Look at Congregational Responses](#) – The Hartford Institute for Religion Research has released a study on how U.S. congregations are navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, and data shows that congregational life is far from being "back to normal." This is the first wave of a collaborative five-year research project funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

[Tech in Churches during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) Analyzing Churches' Engagement with Technology During the COVID-19 Pandemic. This project investigates the technological negotiations and decision-making patterns of congregations in the American Midwest during the pandemic.

[Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today (FACT) Overview](#) This report conducted by Faith Communities Today, a multireligious landscape since 2000, summarizes the findings of the largest national survey of congregations ever conducted in the U.S. It captures a pre- and early pandemic picture of America's faith communities and affirms many of the trends evident over the past few decades, which also highlighting some distinct areas of change.

BOOKS ON HOW TO STUDY CONGREGATIONS

Nancy T. Ammerman (Editor), Jackson Carroll (Editor), Carl Dudley (Editor), William McKinney (Editor), **Studying Congregations: A New Handbook,** Abingdon Press; (September 1998).

Mary Clark Moschella, **Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction**, The Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Robert J. Schreiter, **Constructing Local Theologies,** Orbis Books; (February 1985).

John Swinton, Harriet Mowat, **Practical Theology and Qualitative Research,** SCM Press; 2nd Edition, (January 2006).

HOW TO DIGITALLY STUDY CONGREGATIONS

Heidi A. Campbell, Stephen Garner, **Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture;** Baker Academic, (September 2016).

Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, et al., **Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice,** Sage Publications Ltd; 1st edition, (November 2015).

Liz Przybylski, **Hybrid Ethnography: Online, Offline and In Between;** Sage Publications, Inc., 1st edition, (June 2020).

PODCASTS

Objective Religion Podcast - a podcast at the intersection of religion and data-driven social science. Hosts Frank Newport, former Editor in Chief of Gallup, and Nate Brantingham, recent Princeton Theological Seminary graduate, explore the past, present, and future of religion in American society.

Research on Religion Podcast - Host, Anthony Gill, is professor of political science at the University of Washington and distinguished senior fellow at Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion.

VIDEOS

Introduction to Digital Ethnography Lecture by Rev. Dr Erin Raffety

Sarah Pink: Digital Ethnography Video Sarah Pink is a Professor of Design and Media Ethnography at RMIT University, Australia, and the author or co-editor of several books about digital ethnography.