

**Association for the Sociology of Religion**  
**Zoom Council Meeting**  
**August 20, 2020**

**Present:** James Cavendish, President, James Spickard, President-Elect, Tia Noelle Pratt, Secretary, Paula Nesbitt, Past-President, Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer, Joseph Baker, Editor, SofR, Gerardo Marti, Past-Editor, SofR, Brian Starks, 2020/21 Program Chair, Council Members: Kraig Beyerlein, Rachel Rinaldo, Elisabeth Arweck, Rebecca Kim, Besheer Mohamed, Geneviève Zubrzycki; Observing Incoming Council Members: Tricia Bruce, Damon Mayrl

**Absent:** Amy Adamczyk, Solange Lefebvre, Jualynne Dodson

President Jim Cavendish calls the meeting to order at 11:07am EDT.

**Approval of Minutes – Jim Cavendish**

Jim Cavendish asks for comments on the minutes from previous 2019 Council and Business Meetings

- Paula Nesbitt points out minor corrections that need to be made
- Jim Cavendish asks for a motion to approve the minutes pending corrections pointed out by Paula
- Jim Spickard makes the motion. Geneviève Zubrzycki seconds the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

**Standing Committees – Jim Cavendish**

Most members of standing committees will continue in their roles as per the decisions made in emergency Council meetings and affirmed by a membership vote during the Summer of 2020.

- Development committee needs two new people
- Fichter committee needs one more person
- Jim Cavendish and Jim Spickard will fill those vacancies as appropriate

Most committees did not submit action items

- No comments on committee reports
- Award winners are listed on the business meeting agenda and will be acknowledged at the business meeting

**Executive Officer Report – Rachel Kraus**

Rachel Kraus begins by outlining ASR's need to cut costs

- This need will become more urgent in 2021 when royalties received from OUP decrease
- ASR is able to pay its bills
- Amount budgeted for Gallagher grant amount returns to \$6,000. The amount had been increased for 2020 because of the increased expense related to having the annual meeting in San Francisco.

- Rachel Kraus conducted a virtual tour of Chicago for the 2021 annual meeting; plans to conduct a virtual tour for the 2022 annual meeting in Los Angeles. While the virtual tours were necessitated by COVID-19, they also saved the organization money.
- Rachel would like to begin working with an attorney who specializes in conference consulting instead of HelmsBriscoe.
- The proposed budget has the maximum allowable expenses
- Deficit anticipated for 2021 is small; the hope is that ASR will break even

#### Grant submissions

Rachel Kraus states that the grant submissions process via the website is working well and recommends to Council that it should continue as it ensures applications get to committee chairs in one batch

#### Jim Cavendish invites questions for Rachel Kraus

Jim Cavendish asks why the \$10,000 that was refunded from the San Francisco hotel (due to the cancellation of the 2020 annual meeting because of COVID-19) was not included in the budget

Rachel stated those funds are revenue for 2020 but were an expense from a previous year – possibly 2017. She says she will need to consult past budgets to be certain.

Jim Spickard asked if the Gallagher grant should in fact be left at the higher amount if the goal is to bring in new people

- Rachel responds that the Gallagher amount was raised for 2020 specifically because San Francisco was so expensive
- There is robust discussion around the Gallagher grant amount and the committee's structure. Specifically, if there should be separate committees to administer Gallagher funds – one for international scholars and one for graduate students. Ultimately, there is no motion to adjust the budgeted funding or the committee's structure. There is a consensus that Council should provide structured guidance to the committee around the definition of "graduate students" and "international scholars" for the purpose of applying for Gallagher grants. There is further consensus that the application should include a question asking applicants if they have access to funds for up-front expenses from other sources and if so, how much. There is additional robust discussion on the need for detailed reports from all committees to create institutional memory and decrease labor. Elisabeth Arweck makes the point that the quality of the committee reports changes from year-to-year because they "are only as good as the committee chair".

Jim Cavendish says that it is possible that the 2021 annual meeting will be virtual, but we should plan that it will be in-person; Elisabeth suggests flexibility on how much funding is available through the Gallagher travel grants.

## President's Report – Jim Cavendish

Jim Cavendish would like to examine logistics for a virtual annual meeting if it turns out one is needed in 2021.

- Jim Cavendish announces the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee for Virtual Conference planning to assist the 2021 program committee in determining the feasibility of a virtual or hybrid annual meeting should circumstances necessitate it. Jim Spickard, Besheer Mohamed, and Tricia Bruce agree to join the Ad Hoc Committee. They will work with the members of 2021 Program Committee – Jim Cavendish, Rachel Kraus, and Brian Starks
- Jim Cavendish opens a conversation about the possibility of a hybrid conference in case plane travel is not possible or not preferred, i.e., those who can drive will do so; others will participate virtually
  - This plan would require the hotel to be flexible on the number of room nights and room attrition
  - Jim Spickard reminds of Council of 2019 Program Chair, Holly Folk's strong comments on virtual conferencing; Besheer Mohamed reminds Council that there was not strong support for a virtual conference when the matter was discussed in 2019.
  - Tricia Bruce reminds those present about why ASR exists and mission – presentation of research

### Ad Hoc Committee on Constitution

Jim Cavendish will appoint an Ad Hoc committee to review ASR's Constitution and propose revisions/amendments to Council

### Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

- Tia Pratt has been asked to co-chair ASA-Religion's Diversity & Inclusion Committee and suggests ASR possibly partnering with ASA-Religion because overlap in ASR Council and ASA-Religion Council as well as the overall concerns.
- ASR Council generally supports pursuing the possibility
  - Gerardo Marti says it may work and it may not
  - Tia agrees and says there was enough synergy to merit asking the question and having a conversation; there is general agreement from Council

### Action Items

- Fichter Grant committee has asked to move the date of submitting applications to February 1 instead of May 1
  - there is robust discussion around how COVID hampers conducting qualitative research
  - Jim Cavendish asks if other deadlines should be moved; the consensus is that only the Fichter committee asked for this change, so it should only apply to the Fichter committee
  - Motion made by Paula Nesbitt to adopt the Fichter Committee's recommendation; Elisabeth Arweck seconded; approved unanimously

- Jim Cavendish asks for a motion to approve Rachel Kraus moving forward with a virtual search for a Los Angeles hotel; Elisabeth Arweck offers the motion; Geneviève Zubrzycki seconds the motion; the motion is approved unanimously
- Legal services – There are more questions for Rachel Kraus regarding hiring an attorney to assist with conference contracts; after questions are addressed, Geneviève Zubrzycki moves to accept Rachel’s recommendation and move forward accordingly; Tia Pratt seconds; motion carries unanimously

**Meeting breaks for lunch at 12:32pm EDT and will resume at 1:15pm EDT;** Damon Mayrl and Elisabeth Arweck will not join the second half

**Meeting resumes at 1:18pm EDT**

There is robust discussion on scheduling, awards, and face-to-face vs. virtual annual meetings

**Proposal from the President-Elect**

Jim Spickard – proposal for enhancing international liaison committee and formalizing relationships with international sociology of religion organizations

- There is robust discussion around Jim Spickard’s proposal
- Jim Cavendish would like to see a more detailed proposal
- Paula Nesbitt moves to move forward with an Ad Hoc committee of Jim Spickard and others whom he designates to work with the Gallagher committee to create a detailed, formal proposal for Council to consider
- Jim Spickard seconds the motion; it passes unanimously

**Further Discussion on Reducing ASR Costs – Jim Cavendish**

- OUP royalties will decline by appx \$12,000 in 2021 if we continue with OUP
  - The Publications Committee wants to continue the relationship with OUP
- For 2019, ASR has a deficit of \$7,000
- For 2020, ASR has a surplus of \$38,000
- There is discussion about alternating between physical and virtual annual meetings
  - Jim Spickard points out that in person meetings and collegial activities (receptions) during those meetings are key opportunities to find interlocutors and build community
- Using the hotel technology is a major cost; however, using outside technology either a. might not be allowed or b. if it is allowed, hotel staff will not assist with problems
- Jim Spickard offers an option about the journals
  - Currently, members can opt-out of the printed journal. There may be a value to having an opt-in choice.
  - There is robust discussion about journal access.

- Limiting printed conference programs may be a way to save money
  - Besheer Mohamed points out that a conference program opt-in/out solution is lower hanging fruit – something that can be done easily
- Jim Cavendish suggests reducing/eliminating officer reimbursements for travel to the annual meeting. Tia Pratt makes the point that reducing or eliminating officer reimbursements would be a hardship for those who don't work somewhere that offers conference funding.
- There is consensus that if the various cost saving options were accompanied by dollar figures, Council would be able to make concrete, data-informed decisions.
- Paula Nesbitt brings up the need to consider ADA accommodations
  - The proposed Ad Hoc Committee on ADA accommodations did not materialize
  - Jim Spickard points out that Google Meet provides a transcription that will adhere to ADA requirements without the need for an ASL translator.
  - Jim Cavendish suggests that the Ad Hoc Committee on Virtual Conferences take up the issue of ADA accommodations

**2:09pm EDT Kraig Beyerlein leaves**

Jim Cavendish points out that ASR is not 501C3 organization it is 501C6. This impacts the tax deductible status of donations. Jim Spickard asks if ASR can set up a foundation. Geneviève Zubrzycki points out due to current U.S. tax laws, non-profit organizations no longer receive a robust number small, tax-deductible donations. That type of donation does not merit the type of tax deduction it once did. Hence, they have all but disappeared. Consequently, ASR having 501C3 status or a foundation will likely not benefit the organization the way it might have a few years ago.

There is consensus to rework the cost saving suggestions to include: dollar figures, options for the journal, and eliminating a reception.

**2:29pm EDT Rachel Kraus steps out at Jim Cavendish's request**

Jim Cavendish reminds everyone that Executive Officer Rachel Kraus has great support from Council and the membership with a unanimous vote from council and overwhelming confirmation vote from the membership to renew her term as EO.

Jim Cavendish asks Council to consider raising her stipend by \$1,000 to \$13,000; the new salary would last for the duration of her new term which begins on September 1; Tia Pratt makes the motion; Geneviève Zubrzycki and Rebecca Kim second; motion passes unanimously

**2:40pm EDT Rachel Kraus rejoins the meeting**

Jim Cavendish informs Rachel Kraus of Council's decision to acknowledge her work and show its support via the stipend increase

### **Budget**

Paula Nesbitt moves to approve the proposed budget with the understanding that circumstances may require revisiting the budget and any major revisions will be done in consultation with and approval of Council. Rebecca Kim seconds the motion; motion passes unanimously

### **The Journal – Gerardo Marti and Joseph Baker**

- Rachel Kraus confirms stipends for editor (\$10,500) and editor-emeritus/consultant (\$1,000)
- Gerardo Marti
  - Joseph Baker is the next editor and has taken on manuscripts, been trained, and is working with OUP; transition is going well; relationship with associate editors going well; Joseph has selected his editorial team
  - Impact factor: major increase; new marketing efforts with OUP include podcast and social media
  - Challenges:
    - Getting international scholars to submit to and review for the journal
    - Flow of manuscripts
    - Diversity within the journal – “behind editor’s desk is complex”
- Joseph Baker: Working on a special issue on social distancing; acknowledges a possible lag of qualitative submissions a year from now due to COVID-19 – conscious about it; hard to get reviews submitted right now
- Tia Pratt makes the point that the current issue of the journal (Autumn 2020) features six unique authors. All of them are men. All except one are white and that intentional efforts must be undertaken to make sure this is an anomaly and not the norm.
  - Geneviève Zubrzycki says it’s a submission issue
  - Tia Pratt points out that’s exactly why a plan is needed especially given the gendered and racialized differential between submissions during the COVID-19 quarantine.
  - Rachel Rinaldo points out that diversifying the association will get more diversity in the journal submission pipeline; targeting graduate students and other early career folks in a membership campaign will grow the pipeline for journal submissions

### **3:02pm EDT Geneviève Zubrzycki leaves**

Jim Spickard points out that people submit to a journal because they want to be part of the conversation the journal facilitates and asks, “what is the conversation happening in SoR?”.

There is no commitment to a plan to make sure that the concerns about the Autumn 2020 issue are an outlier and don't become normative.

Jim Cavendish concludes by thanking everyone and inviting them to attend the business meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Before the meeting officially ends, there is further discussion on the contract with OUP.

- OUP can't offer the same level of royalties with the new contract
- Publications committee is working on a plan to stay with OUP
- a decision needs to be made about continuing with OUP
- having an online-only journal doesn't save much money
- there is a consensus that OUP is good but not so good that ASR can't explore other options
- SSSR/JSSR is very happy with Wiley; RRA/RRR is not happy with Springer

**3:07pm Besheer Mohamed leaves**

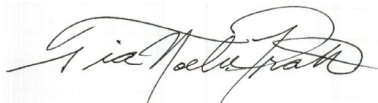
**3:14pm Rachel Rinaldo leaves**

- Gerardo Marti points out that time is getting short if ASR wants to move to a new publisher
- Jim Spickard points out there isn't a lot of interest in changing
- Joseph Baker points out that there really isn't the will to do the work to get proposals for a new publisher.
- There is consensus to accept the 3 year proposal from OUP and tell the publications committee to be ready to solicit proposals for when the new contract expires

Brian Starks points out that it would be helpful to make decisions sooner rather than later for an in-person or virtual conference and a hybrid model won't work unless there's lots of enthusiasm. Jim Cavendish points out that hotels might not like a hybrid model because of uncertainties and needed flexibility around room occupancy and food and beverage consumption.

The meeting ends at 3:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,



ASR Secretary

**ASR Business Meeting via Zoom  
September 10, 2020**

Present: President Jim Cavendish, President-Elect Jim Spickard, Past-President Paula Nesbitt, Secretary Tia Noelle Pratt, Executive Officer Rachel Kraus, SoR Editor Joseph Baker, SoR Editor Emeritus Gerardo Marti, Council Members Tricia Bruce, Kraig Beyerlein, Amy Adamczyk, Jualynne Dodson, ~15 additional members of ASR

President Jim Cavendish calls the meeting to order at 11:06 a.m.

Jim Cavendish conveys the purpose of the business meeting is for Council to update members on the business of the organization and for the members to ask questions. Additionally, there will be acknowledgement of the award recipients.

President Jim Cavendish asks Kevin Christiano to announce the Lifetime Achievement Award. Kevin Christiano acknowledges the lifetime achievement award winner, Eileen Barker, provides a brief summary of her contributions to the field and acknowledges the work of the committee. Eileen Barker is invited to say a few words. She thanks the committee for the award.

Jim Cavendish turns to the Distinguished Sociology of Religion Journal Article Award and McNamara Student Paper Award.

Journal Article – Philip Schwadel and Christopher Garnett received the award for their jointly authored article. Philip Schwadel gives a brief summary of the article and offers thanks to the committee and ASR. Christopher Garnett offers brief words of thanks.

McNamara Award – Michael Rotolo received this award. Jim Cavendish offers a description from the committee as to why they selected this paper. Michael Rotolo offers a few words of thanks, a summary of the paper, and informs the members that his paper is forthcoming in *Sociology of Religion*.

Jim Cavendish asks Tia Noelle Pratt to report on the Fichter Grant Awards.

Tia Noelle Pratt announces the recipients for the Fichter Grant. The committee distributed all of the allotted funds. Only one recipient, Sabrina Alimahomed-Wilson, is present and offers a few words of thanks to ASR for support of her research.

Jim Cavendish summarizes the activities of the organization for the members with several announcements.

Announces the creation of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Virtual Conferences  
Committee will develop a plan in case a face-to-face annual meeting is not possible for 2021 in Chicago.  
Rachel Kraus has been in touch with the hotel in Chicago. The hotel will not penalize ASR if we do not meet contracted room occupancy requirements.

Announces the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee on the ASR constitution



It became clear in discussions around the cancellation of 2020 annual meeting that the constitution needs to be evaluated and possibly amended in order to meet the current needs of ASR. Jim Cavendish will chair the committee.

Announces creation of Ad Hoc Committee on anti-racism

The committee will address increasing diversity in ASR membership and the journal. Tia Noelle Pratt will take the lead.

Announces change in the Fichter Grant deadline at the request of the committee

Ficher deadline for 2021 will move to February 1. Announcement of award will be on April 1.

Announces ASR will move forward with enhancing cooperation/synergy with the ASA-Religion Section and International Sociology of Religion Organizations.

Announces proposal from Jim Spickard for an ASR Liaison to international sociology of religion organizations. Initial proposal will be revised and voted on by Council.

Jim Cavendish moves the conversation to financial matters.

ASR needs to reduce costs.

Costs around the annual meeting, in particular, need to be reduced.

One reason costs need to be reduced is that royalties from Oxford University Press will decline under the new contract for the journal.

Possibilities for reducing costs include: eliminating a reception at the annual meeting, eliminating or reducing the number of printed conference programs, create an option for members to only receive an online edition of the journal.

Rachel Kraus informs the membership that members will now have to opt-in for a printed copy of the journal.

Rhys Williams asks why SofR is not making as much money as anticipated and asks if it would be wise to seek a new publisher. That point is echoed by Warren Goldstein. Rachel Kraus responds saying that OUP is not making as much money from the journal because ASR is losing members and thus subscribers. Also, the climate for journal publishing has changed and publishers are not able to be as generous as they were several years ago. Gerardo Marti adds that for the last contract, OUP offered generous terms. Now the terms are closer to fair and the terms OUP is able to offer is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Gerardo Marti adds that the Publications Committee felt that because the terms were fair and the relationship with OUP is strong, it was in ASR's best interest to stay with OUP. Jim Spickard adds that OUP makes efforts to make the journal accessible to scholars in the global south. While this doesn't bring in much by way of funds, it is important for increasing access for scholars and broadening the reach of the journal.

Shaun Joynt (from South Africa) asks about the journal being open access, says it would be of great benefit to him and other scholars similarly situated. Gerardo Marti responds saying there have been conversations with OUP on this. Open access is now an option that authors can choose. The fee for authors to have their work available as open access is \$3,000. Gerardo Marti has been working with OUP to have more articles – especially the newest articles – available for free. Joseph Baker adds that open access doesn't create greater access because not everyone has the funds to pay for open access. Jualynne Dodson adds that even those from the global north don't always have the resources to pay for their work to be available for open access.

Conversation remains on the journal but turns to other areas.

There is robust discussion around the need for diversity of participation/authorship in the journal and diversity of content – specifically that the journal and ASR will benefit from increased content from scholars from the global south.

Gerardo Marti discusses successes during his time as editor of the journal including the increase of the impact factor, the creation of the “Featured Book Review”, and the creation of the third associate editor position. Submissions to the journal are steady although there has been a recent drop off in qualitative submissions. Andrew Whitehead, Grace Yukich, and Ruthie Braunstein will serve as associate editors alongside Joseph Baker.

Discussion remains on the journal and turns to issues around increasing author diversity.

Gerardo Marti points out that thematic issues are an option for increasing diversity because they are not dependent on submissions. Articles can be solicited.

Conversation remains on the journal and turns to procedural matters.

Jualynne Dodson asks about the criteria of impact factor and discusses the importance of representation on the editorial board and among the editors of the journal.

Joseph Baker acknowledges that while there are women on his editorial team, the entire editorial team is white.

Conversation remains on the journal

There is ongoing discussion around the merits of sending a printed copy to all members.

Emily Yen asks about “plugging-in” to the organization - such as becoming a reviewer for the journal, serving on committees, etc. This highlights the problem of not having the graduate student representative on Council.

Relatedly, Tricia Bruce highlights the need to get ASR to new members which sparks discussion of communication and recruiting members as well as ways to get people involved – those local to the conference, scholars of color, graduate students, etc.

Inger Furseth is invited to acknowledge the Religion and Social Order Book Series from Brill. *Intersecting Religion and Sexuality* is the newest volume in the series. Another volume, edited by Fenggang Yang, is in the pipeline. This prompts discussion on the value of publishing in edited volumes for graduate students and junior scholars.

#### Closing Comments

Jim Cavendish thanks those who are cycling off of council, and the incoming council members. He also acknowledges past presidents who are participating in the business meeting. Additionally, he thanks Gerardo Marti for his work as editor of the journal and welcomes Joseph Baker as the new editor. He goes on to thank Rachel Kraus for her work and Tia Noelle Pratt for her work. Jim Cavendish concludes by thanking everyone for their participation and committee members for their service.

Paula Nesbitt thanks all those who put their name forward to stand for office and acknowledges Gerardo Marti as the President-elect-elect.

Closing thanks for everyone!

Meeting concludes at 1:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tia Noelle Pratt", is written over a light blue grid background.