

RELIGION & EDUCATION

American Educational Research Association

Vol 19 | No. 2

SIG Newsletter

August 2022

AERA CONFERENCE 2023

The 2023 AERA meeting will take place on April 13th - 16th. The place-based component of the conference will take place in Chicago, while the virtual component will be May 4th -5th. The theme for this year is “Interrogating Consequential Education Research in Pursuit of Truth”.

More information can be found [here](#).



Member Updates

Dr. Gayle Pagnoni, SIG Executive Committee Member, is moving on from her position as Program Director at the Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance at Rice University.

She has stated that her plan going forward is to host her grandbabies on the beach! We wish her the best.

Esmeralda Sánchez Salazar, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Rice University, is seeking academic employment as a professor in Sociology or Education. Esmeralda’s research interests pertain to the influence religion holds on Latino college choices and the role of English learner status in predicting college enrollment and degree attainment. Esmeralda’s work has been funded through numerous grants. Her full bio can be found [here](#).



SIG Member Spotlight - Dr. Heidi Hadley

Current Position: Assistant Professor &
Director of English Education Program

Organization: Department of English,
Missouri State University

Email: HHadley@MissouriState.edu

Web: <https://english.missouristate.edu/hhadley.aspx>

Education: 2019 PhD, Language & Literacy Education,
University of Georgia
2011 MED, Reading Education,
Texas Woman's University

Professional Interests: K12 Teacher Identity and Education,
Religion, & Religious Education



Selected Publications:

- Hadley, H. Navigating moments of hesitation: Portraits of evangelical English language arts teachers. *Myers Education Press*. 2021
- Toliver, S. R. & Hadley, H. L. Rhetorically speaking: On white preservice teachers' failure to imagine an anti-racist English education. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. DOI 10.1108/ETPC-09-2020-0112. 2021.
- Hadley, H. L. There's hope for us all: Transformative moments. *English Journal*, 110(5), 109-11. 2021.

The following text was generated from Dr. Hadley's online interview on 18th July 2022. Some parts of her oral response were paraphrased and summarized.

Q1. What is it about the field of Religion & Education that intrigues you?

I'm really interested in how we prepare teachers effectively and well to teach in English language arts classrooms. I guess my interest in religion and education is both personal and professional. I grew up in the Mormon church, and that was a really important part of my identity, both as a youth and into my professional life as a teacher. I taught in Utah, where there was an assumption that all my students shared my same religious beliefs-whether that was a correct or an incorrect assumption, that certainly was the assumption. I went back to get my doctorate after I had quit teaching for many years, and during that time, I had had kind of a break with the faith of my youth largely over issues of LGBTQ equality, and the treatment of women, etc.

I started my teacher's education program not thinking that English Education researchers would study about the religious identities of teachers. I kind of felt like I should be studying (for PhD) something more like how people learn to read, or how we teach writing more effectively. **I have to credit my research advisor Kevin Burke. He was really interested in that part of my teaching life, like what did it mean to teach with a very set religious identity and in a very set religious community.**

It wasn't until my third year where I realized that I still found this really interesting, and **I was still seeing in the students that I was teaching in this teacher education program, the way in which their religious identity made certain things possible and not possible for them.** No one seemed to be really looking at that piece of it in the way that I was. So, that's how I got into religion and education. Kind of not very intentionally, but certainly, I was just really personally and professionally interested in it.

2. What arguments or discoveries did you make in your research?

My participants were (6th-12th grade) teachers who had really strong religious identities (especially evangelical teachers) in Georgia. I was really committed to this concept of culturally responsive teaching, welcoming the identities of the students who come into the classroom and really working with those identities as strengths. **Evangelical teachers were saying that they want to be racially responsive, but they were still really struggling with issues of LGBTQ equality in their own teaching approaches.**

So, the big question I asked participants was, where are the places in your teaching where you're aware that your teaching identity and your religious identity are telling you that you need to do things differently? **I called these conflicting periods their moments of hesitation. I asked participants about their moments of hesitation as religious public-school teachers.**

Interestingly, participating teachers had lots of sticking points: for example, during grading they were often torn between their religious call to be merciful and give grace, and the equally religious call to be honest. By far the biggest sticking points were absolutely on issues of gender and sexuality. Particularly when teachers were faced with transgender students or students who confided with them about sexual assault, they reported that they felt that the answers that they had were only religious answers and they didn't know what to do. **Teachers felt that they were being bad Christians if they were performing as good teachers, or that they were being bad teachers, when they were acting as good Christians.**

My big takeaway is that we have to do a better job in teacher education, of helping our students to trouble and consider the ethics of some of these aporias. We need to consider what needs to be left in the professional sphere and how teachers make sense of what they do as a religious person in the professional sphere. There are no easy answers, because it is an aporia. We are not going to solve these issues satisfactorily for everyone.

I don't think that the answer is always to just know more about religion. I think its to know more about religion in an introspective and critical way, and to be able to examine the ways that your religious beliefs impact the ethics that you have, as you go into community with other people.

SIG Related Opportunities

Conference on Higher Education Values, Belonging, Identity, and Purpose

The First Annual Conference on Higher Education Values, Belonging, Identity, and Purpose will be held online on **February 8-10th, 2023** for Higher Education and Student Affairs professionals, faculty, and graduate students. Hosted by the School of Education, Social Work, and Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC). The theme for the first annual conference will be “Remaking Higher Education to a Place of Belonging for All.” This theme is designed to inspire scholars and practitioners in light of challenges to human rights in the U.S. and around the world. For more details please contact Dr. J. Cody Nielsen, Director, Center for Spirituality and Social Justice, Dickinson College, PA at j.cody.nielsen@convergencestrategies.org.

Fellowship positions at Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, & Dialogue

The Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue is accepting applications for fellowship positions. The center seeks to advance research and scholarship in the field of Ikeda / Soka studies in education. Fellows will be eligible for two years of funding at \$10,000 per year to support doctoral dissertations in the field of Ikeda / Soka studies in education. Applications for the 2022 - 2024 cohort are due on **September 1st, 2022**. More information can be found [here](#).

American Academy of Religion's (AAR) Religious Literacy Guidelines

The American Academy of Religion (AAR) has released a document proposing guidelines for religious literacy in higher education. The document highlights approaches to religious literacy and suggested outcomes for students. More information can be found [here](#).

Religion & Education in the News

[Supreme Court decision allows use of public funds for religious education
I'm a 12-year-old Muslim girl. Where are people like me in the books I read?](#)

Religion & Education SIG Newsletter Contact

Please email us information for the newsletter by the 15th of each month.

Hisham Qureshi (2hishamqureshi@gmail.com)

A PhD Candidate in Religion and an Instructor of World Religions at the University of Georgia. He researches how secular, spiritual, & religious students manage their identities on campuses.

Luke Walden (lcwalden@memphis.edu)

A doctoral student in the Educational Psychology & Research program at The University of Memphis. He is interested in psychometrics and the religious epistemology of college students.