

Out of the 'Broom Closet' and Into the Academy: The Development of Contemporary Pagan
Studies and the Role of Scholarship in Shaping Legitimacy

by

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A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfilment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Religious Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2022

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Contemporary Pagan studies is an academic field that explores the beliefs, behaviours, practices, and identities of contemporary Pagans, borrowing lenses from such fields as religious studies, anthropology, sociology, history, archaeology, and folklore studies. This field emerged within the last roughly forty years, and contains perhaps one hundred scholars worldwide who direct their focus towards this religious community. Two fundamental lines of inquiry guide this critical historical analysis of the field: how do academic fields develop, and how do fields interact with the communities that they study?

Concerning the first cluster of questions – how fields develop – this dissertation explores how fields progress from a few scholars discussing their shared interests informally at a larger conference to having established hubs for sharing and presenting research, including conferences, peer-reviewed journals, university courses, and academic publications. This project documents the spaces where Pagan studies exists, traces how these hubs develop, and explores the pitfalls that scholars often experience during processes of institutionalization.

Concerning the second cluster of questions – how fields interact with communities – this dissertation explores how Pagan studies interacts with Pagans themselves. Engagement assumes various forms, from practitioners who read publications, informants who interact with scholars in the field, students taking an introductory course, and researchers who are Pagans themselves. I argue that through these different interactions, scholars legitimize those subjects about which they write. Legitimation – which can also be understood as validating or authorizing a particular perspective – can occur both implicitly and explicitly. Scholars discursively legitimize communities through the labels that they apply, by positioning the community in a certain (generally favourable) way, or asserting that particular characteristics are essential to all Pagans. More explicitly, scholars legitimize communities when they speak on behalf of Pagans before media, public institutions, or in legal proceedings. This dissertation explores how scholars perform this legitimizing work, and the debates that occur within and outside this field regarding appropriate relationships between scholarship and advocacy.

Although based on a relatively small academic field (studying a small religious community), this dissertation offers insights into such broader processes as how knowledge systems are constructed and the power of academia to legitimize ideas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Douglas E. Cowan, for offering advice, feedback, and encouragement. I also wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Jeff Wilson and Dr. David Seljak for lending their time, guidance, and insights towards greatly improving this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Benjamin E. Zeller and Dr. Seçil Dağtaş for evaluating my dissertation in its final stages. The wider community of scholars at both the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University have also offered support and encouragement. Thanks especially must go to the students whom I have had the pleasure of calling colleagues during my time at Waterloo. A deep gratitude is also due to the faculty assistants in Waterloo's Religious Studies Department, and the team of Librarians at the University of Waterloo for providing valuable support.

Several organizations have generously supported my doctoral studies and research. I would like to thank the Government of Ontario, for an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, the Government of Canada, for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council doctoral scholarship, and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo for the valuable funding that they provided over the years.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the kind and generous support of scholars in the Pagan studies community. I wish to particularly thank everyone affiliated with the Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit in the American Academy of Religion for generously sharing their time, perspectives, and kindness. Numerous other scholars, some of whom are named in this project as informants and others who are not, contributed to this work by sharing their experiences, guiding my thinking, or simply encouraging me that this project was an idea worth pursuing.

I also wish to thank my parents, Dan and Nancy, for always supporting and encouraging me.

Finally, to Miranda, who has made this journey not only bearable, but enjoyable, and who has provided support in more ways than I can count, my deepest and most sincere thanks.

Table of Contents

<i>Examining Committee Membership</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Author’s Declaration</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>v</i>
Chapter 1 – A Critical History of Pagan Studies	1
History of the Field	4
Conferences	5
Publications	7
The (Future) History of Pagan Studies	12
What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?	14
Defending Pagan Studies?.....	18
Where to Go from Here: Issues of Concern in Pagan Studies	22
Situating Myself and this Study	26
Chapter 2 – Academic Fields and Tactics of Legitimacy	30
Overlapping Spheres of Legitimacy	35
Internal Legitimacy	36
Internal Legitimacy in Action	40
External Legitimacy	44
External Legitimacy in Action	46
Academic Legitimacy	49
Pagan Studies as Social Movement.....	51
Building Pagan Studies Hubs	54
Cultivating Academic Legitimacy.....	58
Cultivating Legitimacy	62
Chapter 3 – Methodology	65
Publications	66
Interviews	71
Conferences	73
Pagan Reactions	74
Capturing the Messiness	76
Chapter 4 –Getting Your Foot (Directly) in the Door	78
Pagan Studies in the AAR	79
The (Rejected) Nature Religions Consultation	82
The (Successful) Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation.....	83

Leadership and Health of the Field	85
The CPSPU and Pagan Legitimation	89
Conferences and Institutionalization	95
The Pomegranate	96
The ‘Old’ Pomegranate	97
The ‘New’ Pomegranate.....	99
Where Does The Pomegranate Grow From Here?.....	103
Cherry Hill Seminary	104
Assessing Academic Legitimacy.....	106
Providing Legitimacy	108
Where Does Cherry Hill Seminary Belong?	112
Getting Your Foot Directly in the Door	113
Chapter 5 – Getting Your Foot (Indirectly) in the Door	118
Pagan Studies in the Classroom	119
Surveying the Field	120
How Courses Legitimize Communities	124
Classroom Challenges	127
Pagan Studies and the University Structure	130
Legitimacy in the Classroom	135
Para-Academic Conferences	136
Conference on Current Pagan Studies	137
The CCPS and Academic Legitimacy.....	138
The CCPS and Pagan Legitimacy	143
How Practitioners Engage with the Conference.....	144
Pagan And Polytheist Educational Research Symposium	148
Cherry Hill Seminary Symposia	151
Para-Academic Legitimacy	153
Indirectly Getting Your Foot in the Door	156
Chapter 6 – What Gives You the Rite? Insiders and Outsiders in Pagan Studies	159
Framing the Debate	162
Re-Framing the Debate	165
Perversion of the Witch’s Craft: Tanya Luhrmann and the Ethics of Outsider Observers	170
Oath Breaking and Data Collection.....	174
Hutton v. Whitmore: The Triumph, Trials, and Tribulations of the Moon	179
The Debate Goes Viral.....	183
Repairing the Divide	186
Identity and Constructing Boundaries	188
Relating to Communities.....	191
Relating to Other Fields	194
Chapter 7 – What’s in a Name? The Power of Classification in Pagan Studies	196
Paganism by the Numbers	199
Mutant Statistics.....	201
Other Estimates	206

Putting Numbers to Good Use.....	208
Taxonomy	210
Paganism as New Religious Movement.....	212
Leaving NRM Studies.....	214
Paganism as Indigenous Religion.....	218
Categorical Legitimation.....	220
Re-Evaluating this Categorization.....	222
How Scholars Participate	226
What’s in a Name?.....	230
<i>Chapter 8 – Exiting the Academy? Scholars as Media and Legal Consultants</i>	<i>233</i>
Pagan Chaplains	236
How Scholars Participate	239
Pagans in the News	242
Pagan Crimes?.....	245
Scholars and the Law	249
When and Why Pagans (and Pagan Studies) Enter the Courtroom	250
Courtroom Challenges.....	255
Other Forms of Legal Advocacy	257
Academics as Advocates?.....	259
<i>Chapter 9 - Conclusion</i>	<i>261</i>
Sites for Comparison	270
Where to Go From Here?	277
<i>References</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Appendices.....</i>	<i>324</i>
Appendix A – Pagan Studies Presentations at the American Academy of Religion, 1990-Present	324
Appendix B – Leadership of the AAR’s Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit, 2005-Present	358
Appendix C – <i>The Pomegranate</i> Articles, 1997-Present.....	359
Appendix D – Pagan Studies Courses across Canadian Universities	380
Figure 1 – Pagan Studies Courses listed by University.....	380
Figure 2 – Pagan Studies Courses in Canada by Theme (N = 41)	382
Figure 3 – Pagan Studies Courses in Canada by Department (N = 41)	383

Chapter 1 – A Critical History of Pagan Studies

In his book examining the field of Jewish studies, Aaron Hughes writes, “The story of Jewish studies is not something of interest only to those who study Judaism; it should be compelling reading to anyone interested in the formation of disciplines” (2013, 15). While tracing the formation of disciplines occasionally delves into what seems like minutiae – a journal’s formation, reactions to a single article – these are building blocks in a larger story. Further, while Pagan studies is a seemingly insignificant field compared to others, the processes therein – how disciplines form, how scholarship functions to legitimize communities, and how communities interact with scholarship – resemble other academic discourses. Selecting this site builds on Gary Alan Fine’s miniaturist approach to “tiny publics.” Fine suggests that sociologists analyze the small group, and how they are linked to larger structures (2012, 177). Pagan studies is indeed a small group, with perhaps one hundred scholars worldwide conducting research in this area at a given time. In this project, I analyze this small group to explore much wider issues in the study of religion and academia more broadly.

In their treatise on the social construction of reality, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann write, “In our view, empirical research in the relation of institutions to legitimating symbolic universes will greatly enhance the sociological understanding of contemporary society” (1967, 188). Representing a “reflexive ‘turn to practice’” (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011, 11), I explore how a particular institution – Pagan studies – legitimizes Paganism as modern religious belief and practice. While science and technology studies has mapped how practices within the hard sciences legitimize knowledge, there are fewer explorations of these processes in the social sciences (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011, 11). Pagan studies describes an academic sub-field that emerged within the last fifty years. Contemporary Paganism (hereafter, simply Paganism) is an umbrella term for various religions, including such traditions as Wicca, Heathenry, Druidry, and Romuva. Although it is difficult to precisely define what beliefs unite this assemblage of traditions, outlooks broadly include “belief in the sacredness of nature, belief in the immanence of divinity, and belief in a Pagan’s ability to interact with the subtle processes and energies by which the universe is established and maintained” (Cowan and Bromley 2015, 162). Contemporary Pagan studies (hereafter, simply Pagan studies) describes the academic study of Pagan groups, practitioners, ideas, and activities. This field comprises roughly one hundred scholars who present their research in journals, at conferences, in classrooms, and through monographs, working within such fields as religious studies, sociology, anthropology, folklore studies, history, and archaeology.

Two fundamental lines of inquiry guide this project. First, how do new academic sub-fields develop? How do they get started? What important benchmarks are involved as they grow? Are there common pitfalls that scholars encounter in this process of institutionalization? In this, I am guided by histories of Pagan studies, histories of adjacent or related fields (e.g., the growth of

religious studies or Jewish studies), and studies of fields that may not seem immediately relevant (e.g., the growth of Black and gender studies). My second guiding cluster of questions concerns how scholars interact with their subject of study, and relatedly, how communities interact with research about their own group. To explore these and similar questions, I am primarily guided by Berger and Luckmann's work concerning how social universes are built and maintained. I am also guided by research concerning how scholars legitimize ideas through their work. The subsequent chapters outline the theories guiding my work, the methods I employ to collect and analyze data, and the specific issues that I interrogate most closely. This chapter introduces what Pagan studies is, who is involved, and what scholars have observed about this field's history.

A reminder that I continually offer throughout this project is that Pagan studies is representative of many other sub-fields in academia. While the communities that scholars explore or methods they adopt may differ from scholars studying, say, paleoecology or media studies, most issues that I highlight are constant across scholarship. Comparability applies to both the structural manner by which sub-fields are formed, and to larger conceptual issues that arise throughout a field's development. Emergent fields often struggle, for example, to establish relevance beyond a group of scholars who initially advocated for creating that field. Many fields also share debates over such issues as advocacy or finding the proper voice for scholarship. Although I interrogate specific scholars, publications, or trends throughout this study, I do not intend to suggest that Pagan studies is somehow an egregious offence to academia. Rather, Pagan studies offers a case study to highlight broad trends that exist in many fields.

History of the Field

Since developments in Pagan studies are intertwined with deeper issues that this project explores, this outline of the field is necessarily condensed. However, a narrative introduction into people, outlets, events, and issues that are central to my research provides familiarity with this realm of scholarship. As a critical history of Pagan studies, this project makes extensive references to certain scholars and texts, and this lay of the land helps outline the key sites and figures.

This survey builds on several scholars who have sketched histories of the field, all of which offer important data about significant books, conferences, and developments (Pike 1996; Adler 2006; Davy 2007; Reid and Rabinovitch 2008; Aitamurto and Simpson 2016; Doyle White 2016c). I closely follow the trajectories laid out by other scholars because they offer a clear roadmap, and more importantly, because they document what are *widely considered to be* this field's most significant developments. Tomoko Masuzawa closes her history of the World Religions discourse, writing, "We must attend to the black folds, the billowing, and the livid lining of the fabric of the history we unfurl, the story we tell from time to time to put ourselves to sleep. This is one of the reasons historiography must always include the historical analysis of our discourse itself" (2005, 328). The brief sketch of Pagan studies' history which follows represents the stories that Pagan studies tells itself, about where it came from, what it has accomplished, and where it hopes to go from here.

After highlighting some key developments, a quote that Margot Adler relays from Ronald Hutton paints a fairly grim state of affairs: "In Britain," he writes, academics that study Paganism are 'few and found mainly in the least prestigious and well-funded institutions and in fixed-term temporary posts'" (Adler 2006, 422). Granted, the situation has improved slightly

since the early 2000s. Many scholars hold tenured positions at prestigious institutions, from the Ivy League to the California State University system. However, Hutton's overall message – that Pagan studies ends up being little more than a “marginal and expendable” (422) aspect of religious studies – remains accurate. Pagan studies currently has a presence in some professional associations, has an academic journal, and many scholars who publish and/or teach in this area. However, scholars also occasionally face struggles to convince colleagues of their work's relevance and value. The developments outlined here highlight how this academic community has attempted to make inroads into academia.

Conferences

The earliest signs of life for Pagan studies were thematic conferences, which allowed scholars (who were often graduate students at the time) conducting research to connect and collaborate. Michael York organized the first academic conference on Paganism, titled “New Age Dimensions of Goddess Spirituality” in 1990 at the Centre for New Religions at King's College London (2015, 118). Other early conferences included “New Age and Paganism” held at Bath Spa University College in 1993, “Contemporary Paganism in the British Isles” at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1994, another titled “Nature Religion Today” at Lancaster University in 1996, and “Re-Enchantment” at King Alfred's College, Winchester in 1997 (Davy 2007, 207-8; Doyle White 2016c, 190). Several of these conferences resulted in published anthologies, including *Paganism Today* (Hardman and Harvey 1996), *Nature Religion Today* (Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel 1998), and a special volume of *Diskus*, the peer-reviewed journal

for the British Association for the Study of Religions in 2000.¹ These conferences and edited volumes document how the field began and who was involved. For example, *Nature Religion Today* features chapters by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Joanne Pearson, Ronald Hutton, Susan Greenwood, Jone Salomonsen, and Vivianne Crowley, many of whom remain active in Pagan studies, even years later. Conferences also allowed scholars to network and raise the overall profile of this branch of study. Published conference proceedings also produce permanent and observable markers that a field exists. Finally, these conferences (and published proceedings) were often cited as evidence of a growing academic discourse when advocating to create other outlets.

The most formal conference space for Pagan studies is within the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Informal ‘pre-conference meetings’ ran from 1995 to 2004, and later became the Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit (discussed further in chapter 4). Precipitating these meetings was the Nature Religion Scholars Network (NRSN). Started by Chas Clifton, the NRSN is a listserv or electronic mailing list that includes both formal announcements (calls for papers), and informal discussions (e.g., reactions to new survey data about Pagans). The NRSN helped scholars connect and collaborate, and continues to foster dialogue across the field. Members formulated the idea for this listserv at the 1994 AAR annual meeting, and the scholars involved eventually established the Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit.

1. Although appearing somewhat later than the first conferences, Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloï note that their edited volume (2007) similarly emerged from a conference session at a 2002 Alternative Spirituality and New Age Studies Conference (xv).

Publications

The most common means by which scholars trace Pagan studies' history is through publications, the most visible markers of a field.² Offering the earliest date for Pagan studies publications, Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson note that Pagan groups were discussed in publications from the 1930s concerning Germanic groups that supported Hitler's rise to power (2016, 484). While not listed by many others who trace the field's history, these are a starting point of academic interest in modern Paganism. Aitamurto and Simpson also highlight Elliot Rose's *A Razor for a Goat* (1962) and Stuart Piggott's *The Druids* (1968), which sought to debunk the beliefs of contemporary practitioners (2016, 484). These books suggest a slightly antagonistic relationship between scholars and practitioners, yet also mark scholars beginning to consider the study of Pagans as relevant. Robert Ellwood's "Notes on a Neopagan Religious Group in America" (1971) further represents this shift in tone. This paper "initiated the academic study of modern Paganism as a religious movement in its own right" (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 485). Ellwood was not derogatory towards Paganism, but rather situated a Pagan community within broader themes of American religious life.

Highlighting several publications from the 1970s which briefly discuss Paganism, Sarah M. Pike outlines broad challenges to establish this field. Books from this period include Edward A. Tiryakian's (1972) "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," and Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone's (1974) edited volume *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*. These scholars study the broader cultic milieu, and only briefly discuss Paganism. While Marcello

2. Further, unlike conferences – which require several scholars working collectively to organize and run – publications generally result from a single scholar (and perhaps a few editors), allowing publications to emerge much more frequently than thematic conferences.

Truzzi directly called for more sustained ethnographic focus on Pagan groups (1974, 645), Pike comments, “Unfortunately, few social scientists took this advice and ethnographic research remains scarce. They continue to offer ‘introductions’ to and ‘generalizations’ about these ‘social forms’” (1996, 358).³ Other contemporaneous publications that *briefly* treat Paganism include Gini Scott’s *Cult and Countercult: A Study of A Spiritual Growth Group and a Witchcraft Order* (1980) and F.R. Lynch’s “Towards a Theory of Conversion and Commitment to the Occult” (1977) and “‘Occult Establishment’ or ‘Deviant Religion?’ The Rise and Fall of a Modern Church of Magic” (1979). Pike argues that despite some strengths of these ethnographic treatments, they are characterized by “lack of attention to ethnography and overemphasis on ‘deviance’” (1996, 361). Paganism was generally framed as an odd choice that needed to be justified, rather than exploring any benefits that practitioners derived from their involvement.

The rate of publications accelerated during the 1990s, and the following section borrows from Barbara Jane Davy’s summary, which separates books by category (2007). While many examples are obviously left out of this brief overview, it helps introduce prominent scholars and approaches. The first category for example, which Davy calls ‘theology,’ includes Melissa Raphael’s *Theology and Embodiment* (1996), Carol Christ’s *Rebirth of the Goddess* (1997), and Michael York’s *Pagan Theology* (2003). Books in this genre (from both professional and amateur scholars) outline Pagan beliefs, trace how these ideas developed, and draw comparisons to other belief systems. Davy’s ‘history’ category is the most varied, including trial records and accounts of witchcraft hunts, as well as books by Pagan insiders (206-7). The former books are not relevant to modern Paganism, and the latter are not scholarly in the traditional sense.

3. Pike also applies this observation of cursory treatments (rather than deeper analysis) to Nachman Ben-Yehuda’s *Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Sciences and Scientists* and even to Margot Adler’s *Drawing Down the Moon* (1996, 361-2).

However, such books often shape how Pagans understand their history, and are therefore informative for scholars seeking to understand Paganism. Davy's group of 'history' texts concludes with more scholarly books, including Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon* (1999) and Chas Clifton's *Her Hidden Children* (2006), which trace Paganism's growth in America and Britain respectively. That the theology and history categories include books by professional scholars, amateurs, and leaders of Pagan communities foreshadows the diverse backgrounds of participants in this field.

Davy's 'textual studies' genre, which contains research exploring how Pagan communities approach texts and ideas, includes Wendy Griffin's *Daughters of the Goddess* (2000), Douglas Ezzy's "The Commodification of Witchcraft" (2001), and Chris Klassen's *Storied Selves: Shaping Identity in Feminist Witchcraft* (2008). Davy acknowledges that many others could be added to this list. For example, Clifton and Harvey's co-edited volume *The Paganism Reader* (2004) contains primary texts that practitioners use to construct their beliefs and excerpts from important Pagan figures. Douglas Ezzy and Helen A. Berger's *Teenage Witches* (2007) and Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloi's edited volume *The New Generation Witches* (2007) both explore how young Pagans interact with media. The continued growth of publications exploring how Pagans engage with books, movies, TV, and the internet demonstrates the popularity of this avenue of research.

Davy's final genre, ethnographic studies, is by far the largest, and represents the prominence of this approach in Pagan studies. Among the many works she highlights are Graham Harvey's *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (1997), Sarah M. Pike's *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (2001), Jone Salomonsen's *Enchanted Feminism: The Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco*

(2002), Robert Wallis' *Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans* (2003), Kathryn Rountree's *Embracing the Witch and the Goddess: Feminist Ritual-Makers in New Zealand* (2004), and Sabina Magliocco's *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (2004). Although many ethnographies are absent from this list, it broadly represents some of the field's most prominent scholars. Further, that most of these books were published between 2001 and 2005 highlights the growth of Pagan studies.⁴

Edited volumes, which help readers grasp key themes in Pagan studies, also grew during this period. The first such collection, *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, edited by James R. Lewis, appeared in 1996. Later examples include *Researching Paganisms* (Blain, Ezzy, and Harvey 2004), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures* (Strmiska 2005), *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism* (Lewis and Pizza 2009), and more recently, *Contemporary Paganism and Native Faith Movements in Europe* (Rountree 2015).⁵ Edited volumes are significant as they are often the first publications that students or those unfamiliar with the field may encounter. Sîân Reid, who edited *Between the Worlds: Readings in Contemporary Neopaganism* (2006), explains the thinking that she believes motivates such projects: ““Oh well, gee, you know, Routledge has one, we need [one as well].””⁶ As similar volumes emerge, a topic is increasingly recognized as an important area of research, which publishers thereby seek to represent in their collections. In addition to disseminating knowledge and promoting awareness of the field, these anthologies raise the profile of individual contributors. Chapters come from such figures as Magliocco, Clifton, Cusack, Berger, Harvey, Ezzy, and York, creating an early canon of scholars

4. With many of the listed books representing the product of those authors' dissertations, these books also point to Pagan Studies becoming a popular topic among graduate students around the 1990s.

5. Volumes I and II of *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* (Lewis 2004; Lewis and Tøllefsen 2016) also contain chapters dedicated to Paganism.

6. Sîân Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

who study modern Paganism. Because editors of one volume rely on their professional circles for contributions, these volumes also reflect the networks formed between scholars.

While the field's early history is easily summarized through individual books, following this thread of publications becomes more challenging over time. Rather than continuing to list books, I highlight growth through institutional outlets. The first is *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. Established in 1997 by several members of the AAR's New Religious Movements group (Lucas 1997, 1), this interdisciplinary journal publishes research about a wide variety of NRMs, and has offered an outlet for much important research about Paganism.⁷ A more specialized outlet is *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*. In 2004, Clifton resurrected a practitioner-driven magazine as a peer-reviewed, academic journal, giving scholars another place to publish and offering Pagan studies an institutional presence.

Another outlet offering an identifiable space for Pagan studies research is a Pagan studies book series which has bounced between various publishers over the last twenty years.⁸ Between 2004 and 2009, this series (co-edited by Clifton and Griffin through AltaMira Press) published *Researching Paganisms* (Blain, Ezzy, and Harvey 2004), *Her Hidden Children* (Clifton 2006), *Introduction to Pagan Studies* (Davy 2007), *Hidden Circles in the Web* (Wise 2008), and *Rewriting Women* (Coleman 2009) (Clifton 2015, 6-7). Due to turnover among AltaMira's editors, the series travelled between various publishers, resulting in two additional edited volumes —

7. *Nova Religio*'s Editorial Board has also hosted many Pagan studies scholars, offering an institutional home that is at least partially concerned with Pagan studies.

8. To offer a brief summary of this series' history, it began with Rowman & Littlefield under its imprint AltaMira Press in 2004. After changeover in staff at AltaMira, Clifton and Griffin took the series to Equinox, who then briefly merged with Acumen. Acumen was eventually acquired by Taylor & Francis, which published books from this series under both its Acumen and Routledge imprints. Eventually, Clifton took the series back to Equinox, where it currently resides. The detailed history of this series' circuitous journey to Equinox publishing is detailed in Clifton (2015).

Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music (Weston and Bennett 2013) and *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Aitamurto and Simpson 2013) — residing with Routledge. Presently titled the ‘Contemporary and Historical Paganism’ series, this series is now published by Equinox, and has since released *Being Viking: Heathenism in Contemporary America* (Calico 2018) and *Constellated Ministry for the Pagan Spiritual Landscape* (Emore 2021).⁹ While Equinox is hardly the only press to publish Pagan studies research, Clifton points to this dedicated series as an important benchmark in the field’s institutionalization (2015, 6-8; see also Griffin 2015). Further, the first several books in this series contain a note from the series editors in the front matter, stating: “the most exciting feature of this series is that it will take the lead in building Pagan studies into a legitimate field by focusing research on this unexplored topic” (see for example Davy 2007, ii). Although the drifting nature of the series could hint at the field’s struggle to promote itself, the series indicates interest from academic publishers in research about Paganism. Further, series editors (at different times, this has included Clifton, Griffin, Bado, and Simpson) represent identifiable figures to whom scholars can pitch their manuscript ideas.

The (Future) History of Pagan Studies

Pagan studies is still relatively early in its development, which means that any attempt at writing history is soon outdated.¹⁰ Further, writing history becomes more difficult as phenomena grow and diversify. Summarizing the size and scope of Pagan studies as of the 1990s can be

9. As of 2021, two more books are listed as forthcoming, including *The Spider Dance: Tradition, Time and Healing in Southern Italy* by Giovanna Parmigiani and *Albion’s Sage for the New Age: John Michell, Radical Traditionalism and the Myth of Sacred England* by Marleen Thaler.

10. That several figures have witnessed *subsequent* scholars expand on their timeline attests to this challenge. My project is also subject to this phenomenon.

done by listing several books, conferences, and several graduate students who were working on theses.¹¹ However, growth means there are now many more scholarly treatments of Paganism. This makes it more difficult (and frankly, less useful) to list every book published about Paganism.

Regarding how academic fields diversify, Thomas Medvetz describes “the difficulty of specifying the boundaries of an intellectual field” (2018, 468). Scholars who study Pagans address such themes as feminism, popular culture, ritual, or folklore, making it difficult to arbitrate where Pagan studies begins and ends. Further, since Paganism is an amorphous group of traditions, it is sometimes difficult to separate which themes or participants even count as Pagan. Another issue of diversification is that some scholars are only tangentially affiliated with Pagan studies. Laurel Zwissler’s *Religious, Feminist, Activist* (2018c) exemplifies some of the issues discerning boundaries. Examining ritual activism in Catholic, Protestant, and Pagan communities, Zwissler’s book intersects with Pagan studies, but also with ritual studies, gender studies, and postcolonial theory (not to mention ethnographies of Catholic and Protestant practitioners). More broadly, Nicole Kelley (2013) suggests that religious studies “had been doing too much lumping,” and was therefore in need of “some splitting” (333). As academic fields grow and diversify, they become harder to describe as a discrete field. While splitting hardly seems imminent in Pagan studies, the number of topics and approaches contained under this large umbrella raises challenges. Scholars may not present their research in Pagan studies’ traditional venues. Once published, manuscripts may not be reviewed in *The Pomegranate*, nor cited by others in this branch of scholarship. Becoming more thematically diverse complicates intra-field cohesion.

11. Even summarizing Pagan Studies’ presence as of the mid-2000s also presents clear benchmarks with the founding of *The Pomegranate* and the AAR’s Pagan Studies Unit.

A final issue of diversification are scholars' localities. Pagan studies' "geographic area" is widening, growing especially in Eastern Europe (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 491). Further increasing disconnectedness, some research about Pagans in these contexts gets published in other spaces (and languages). While the institutionalization of Pagan studies in the AAR, for example, was significant for North American scholars, a new association dedicated to Pagan studies in Latvia may not interest a scholar from Waterloo. Although important developments in Pagan studies are occurring in other spaces and languages, they are outside the scope of this project, and I suspect, outside the general awareness of some other (North American) Pagan studies scholars.

What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?

A provocative essay published just before I began my research offers another helpful introduction to this project. Markus Altena Davidsen's "What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?" published in 2012, criticizes the *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism* (Lewis and Pizza 2009) for embodying broader issues that plague religious studies, namely, uncritical generalizations and scholarly claims that uphold emic assertions. Revealing this essay's prominence in Pagan studies discourse, Davidsen launched a larger conversation, in the form of a conference panel and several journal articles. Even years later, Davidsen's critique is still referenced in publications (Mäkelä 2019), my interviews, and casual conversations.

Although Davidsen's review of the *Handbook* represents the most targeted criticism of Pagan studies, it is hardly unique for scholars to condemn the state of affairs in such a targeted way. A range of similar essays titled 'What is Wrong *Blank* Studies' address issues that similarly plague such broad disciplines as Chinese political studies, women's studies, cultural studies, and

migration scholarship (Johnson 1982; Patai 1995; Stephenson 2002; Levitt 2012). This section briefly outlines Davidsen’s main complaints against Pagan studies to briefly summarize the issues allegedly facing this area of study.

Recalling the lines of inquiry guiding my research – how do branches of research develop and how do academic communities interact with the populations they study – I discuss Davidsen’s essay in-depth here because it helps introduce both issues. First, regarding how fields are built, his essay represents common assessments that emergent branches of study often receive, and highlights specific challenges to the perception of Pagan studies.¹² Second, regarding how fields interact with communities, Davidsen underlines examples of how scholars use research to legitimize Paganism. Responses to Davidsen offer further perspectives on what scholars consider to be appropriate relationships to communities.

The ongoing conversations that Davidsen’s essay sparked cannot be completely addressed here. To introduce the issues which are most germane to my project, the following section briefly outlines Davidsen’s assessment of the field, and the responses to his work. Responses from Michael York and Nikki Bado, who sought to defend this scholarly domain, versus responses from Amy Hale and Shawn Arthur, who acknowledge the validity of Davidsen’s critiques, highlight contentious debates of what Pagan studies scholarship should look like.

Concerning the content of Davidsen’s essay, he does praise the work of some contributors to the *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism*, who represent what he calls the “scientific, or critical-naturalist, research program” (186). Among others, these include Berger, Reid, Magliocco, and Cusack, who embody what Davidsen considers to be proper scholarship.

12. Demonstrating that other fields became aware of certain issues shaping Pagan studies, Amy Hale notes that Davidsen’s critique even became a topic of discussion in the field of esoteric studies (2013, 152).

Beyond these figures however, Davidsen's main criticism is that "scholars working from an explicitly pagan and insider point of view outnumber scholars who study paganism from a critical-naturalist viewpoint" (184). He labels this group of scholars as the "religionist" perspective, and sub-divides these figures further along a continuum from "descriptive" to "theoretical." While the descriptive camp "need only minimal reinterpretation to be made commensurable with the critical-naturalist paradigm," those representing the theoretical camp adopt approaches which are "incommensurable with the critical-naturalist program" and hence are only useful to scholars of Paganism as data (186-7). Davidsen argues that this group's work is theological and essentialist, using scholarship to promote the claim that *one's particular version* of a thing is the most legitimate. I explore Davidsen's comments here to help introduce how scholars can legitimize religious communities through their work.

Definitions often underpin legitimation. In its introduction, the *Handbook of Contemporary Paganism* identifies several "shared Pagan values," including "acceptance of diversity, immanent divinity, and reverence for life on earth" (Lewis and Pizza 2009, 3). Davidsen argues that asserting these essences constitutes a "normative construction" of Paganism (187), presenting one possible set of beliefs and actions as Paganism's essential core. However, these idealized constructs require dismissing any conflicting data. For example, the *Handbook* includes articles on fascist Pagan groups in the UK (Gallagher 2009) and racist Odinism in the US (Gardell 2009), suggesting that not all Pagans share "acceptance of diversity" as a value. Although failing to represent Paganism writ large, defining certain "shared Pagan values" portrays the community in a positive manner. Davidsen similarly criticizes Robert Puckett, who briefly describes instances of coven leaders exerting control over groups. Puckett notes that such instances are popularly labelled the "High Priest(ess) syndrome," and calls these

a “pathological exception” to natural Wicca (2009, 134). However, if this phenomenon is so common to merit a nickname, Davidsen asks why it is declared an “exception” (188). Rather than constructing more nuanced definitions which account for exceptions, scholars construct authentic Wicca as generally positive.

Offering further examples of how scholars reinforce certain perspectives, Davidsen suggests that Melissa Harrington “contrasts authentic, communal and ethical paganism (Wicca) with what she sees as commercial, commodified, and materialistic new age” (189). Harrington also disputes Paul Heelas’ description of New Agers using “Wiccan rituals,” arguing that due to Wiccans’ preferences, scholars should call these “Wiccan-*derived* rituals” (2007a, 445, see also Heelas 1996). Davidsen, however, argues that by protecting and upholding a positive (and authentic) Pagan category — while relegating others “into the pejorative new age category” — Harrington speaks “on behalf of a certain group of elite Wiccans who are doing identity management and boundary-work” (189). For Davidsen, such a dispute might offer important data to explore, but is an inappropriate approach for scholars researching Pagans.

Finally, Davidsen highlights Jone Salomonsen (2009), who discusses initiation practices among Reclaiming Witches. Elevating Reclaiming as egalitarian, Salomonsen describes this initiation as “radically different from conversion to a sect” (371). Contrasting the portrayal that Salomonsen offers with Reclaiming’s actual initiation process, Davidsen highlights how Salomonsen forces her data into a pre-established “insider interpretation of the situation” (191). For example, Salomonsen disregards how the Reclaiming initiation process enacts power and authority as a way to legitimize Paganism. Taking this *Handbook* and its contributors as representative of the broader field, Davidsen concludes, “most scholarship within pagan studies rests on the methodological principles of essentialism, exclusivism, loyalism, and

supernaturalism,” thereby advancing “idealized notions of paganism’s essence,” and contributing more “to the development and promotion of paganism than to the critical study of the modern pagan movement” (194-5).

Defending Pagan Studies?

Davidson’s essay provoked many responses from Pagan studies scholars. Among these responses, some scholars pushed back, arguing that Davidson did not properly understand the intricacies of studying Pagans. The most vocal disputants, Nikki Bado and Michael York, argue for example that Davidson was overly selective in his evidence of Pagan studies’ shortcomings, or that Pagans are a unique group meriting their own approach to research. In contrast, other scholars such as Ethan Doyle White, Shawn Arthur, and Amy Hale largely agreed with Davidson, acknowledging that Pagan studies wrestles with such issues as advocacy and essentialism. Although I cannot give full attention to every point raised in this debate,¹³ the following section summarizes responses to contextualize how this field has responded to methodological and theoretical critiques.

Arguing that the absence of certain authors makes the *Handbook* an unrepresentative volume, Doyle White critiques Davidson for only evaluating a single anthology (2012, 7). Michael York similarly notes that while some gaps exist in the *Handbook*, no single text will be able to cover everything (2013, 143). Though valid, these points also sidestep the main thrust of Davidson’s argument, which is that while the *Handbook* may not represent the entire field, the

13. As noted, this debate is traceable through several essays and presentations. The first response to Davidson came in Ethan Doyle White’s “In Defense of Pagan Studies” (2012). At the 2013 AAR Annual Meeting, the Contemporary Pagan Studies Group sponsored a panel of papers addressing Davidson, which were later published in *The Pomegranate*.

essays included are still part of Pagan studies (and an extensive, 600-page volume at that), making Davidsen's selection valid. Reinforcing the relevance of this single text, Lewis and Pizza's list of shared essences also continue to shape scholarship about Pagans. For example, in a recent article, Abby Maxwell defines Paganism through Lewis and Pizza's list of characteristics (2020). Many junior scholars with whom I spoke cited the *Handbook* as their entryway to the field. Arthur adds that the *Handbook* is representative of broader trends in the field, suggesting that chapters within other Pagan studies volumes also "rely solely on phenomenology, theology, and personal experience as scholarship without further analysis" (2013, 167; see specifically Lewis 1996; Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel 1998; Blain, Ezzy, and Harvey 2004). Although some complained that Davidsen was overly selective, there is ample justification for the *Handbook* being indicative of broader trends.

Offering further complaints about Davidsen, Bado objects to his supposed dismissal of insiders. Acknowledging her own Pagan identity, she claims that Davidsen would consider this "an admission of guilt" that "immediately makes my scholarship suspect" (2013, 123). Again though, this misrepresents Davidsen's actual criticism. By suggesting that they are problematic and insulting to practitioners, Bado rhetorically sidesteps and thereby attempts to invalidate the rest of Davidsen's observations. Bado ignores Davidsen's distinction between the identities of scholars and the approach one adopts in research, positioning hers as an embattled perspective fighting to be recognized as legitimate.¹⁴

14. Beyond these responses to Davidsen, this argument is also found in other Pagan studies hubs. Some Pagan studies scholars complain that their work is unfairly judged based on their identity, criteria not extended to other sub-fields. At the Conference on Current Pagan Studies (discussed in chapter 5), Davidsen's article frequently came up. One scholar lamented the double-standard she thinks is applied to Pagan Studies, noting, "SBL is mostly a bunch of Christians and Jewish people studying the Bible." At another meeting, one attendee asserted, "a Muslim studies AAR section will be filled with people named Abdul." These patently racist defenses do not actually address Davidsen's observations, instead calling it unfair and offensive to critique someone's identity. Comparisons to Biblical or Islamic studies do not actually engage with the scholarship that these fields produce, but merely focus on the identity of scholars.

Some responses to Davidsen raise deeper questions about how scholars understand research about Pagans. While Davidsen noted an absence of research on solitary Pagans in the *Handbook*, York excuses this omission, writing, “it is difficult to get an emic perspective since, with the exposure to fieldwork, such practice would no longer be solitary” (143). However, by suggesting that studies of “solitaries” are impossible without tainting the data, York ignores methodological alternatives, seemingly implying that solitary Pagans never interact with other people. For example, Helen Berger’s recent study explores the beliefs, behaviours, and practices of solitaries through survey data (2019). Douglas E. Cowan’s study of Pagans online reveals another way to analyze solitaries (2005). Rather than simply acknowledging that a gap exists, York overemphasizes the complexity of studying Pagans.

Elsewhere, York even seems unaware that he may actually agree with Davidsen. York writes, “normative constructions of ‘pure’ Paganism are impossible in an academic context since there is no such thing as ‘pure’ Paganism,” adding that most scholars recognize the existence of “many Paganisms” and that Paganism remains “in an ongoing process of defining itself” (140). Although York frames this as a criticism of Davidsen, this observation reflects Davidsen’s central argument. While there is no pure form of Paganism, Davidsen argues that the *Handbook*’s editors and contributors manufacture Paganism’s essence through their definitions and descriptions. Scholars always construct data through their work, something York fails to recognize.

York’s defense of the field also raises questions concerning Pagan studies’ audience. While Davidsen suggests that the *Handbook* fails to observe certain scholarly conventions, York counters, “although scholars have contributed to it, it need not strictly serve the purpose of scientific ethnography but can instead provide speculations, opinions, information and

understandings” for the Pagan community (148). Ignoring that the *Handbook* comes from an academic publisher, York suggests that the book can (and should) serve the interests of the Pagan community. Suggesting that scholarship has an audience beyond the academy, and that Pagans read research to deepen understanding of their beliefs and practices reinforces the relevance of Pagan engagement with scholarship. Further, regardless of whether his claim is true, York reveals that some scholars write as though their work will be consulted by (non-academic) Pagan audiences.

Bado’s response raises similar issues concerning who scholars consider to be Pagan studies’ intended audience. Building on Wittgenstein’s analogy of games, Bado suggests that Davidsen must respect the rules of the game being played, writing, “we don’t criticize theologians for not being something else. Theology is its own kind of ‘language game,’ with its own rules, goals, levels of skill and practices. It is distinct from other types of games in the study of religions” (130). If Davidsen wants to “critique a player of theology,” he must “critique the player according to the rules and skills appropriate to that practice” (130). However, Bado ignores that just as games are played according to specific rules, they are also played within specific arenas. One issue for Pagan studies is where it wants to ‘play.’ Spaces such as the AAR (in which Bado first delivered her paper) has historically aligned itself with religious studies. Hale similarly writes that while theology is a valid enterprise, “it is essential that scholars delineate theological discourses from ethnographic ones” (157). In other words, while Bado places the onus on Davidsen to critique theologians from a theological perspective, Hale suggests that those doing theological work (examples of which abound in the *Handbook*) need to clearly articulate where they situate their work. Failure to do so “may eventually harm the academic legitimacy and the perception of quality of scholarship within Pagan Studies” (157).

In contrast to some negative evaluations to Davidsen's work, other scholars were largely accepting of the points that he raised. Doyle White calls Davidsen's work "admirable and valuable," adding, "I share many of his concerns, and believe that his essay has real potential for provoking progressive change and reform within Pagan studies" (11). Hale's response is also largely supportive, focusing on how scholars in area studies can often (knowingly or unknowingly) serve as activists for the community being studied. She suggests that because "scholars frequently present Paganism 'as wished for' rather than exposing the tensions and difficulties" that exist (154), some scholars use the field to legitimize Pagan perspectives.

This discussion of Davidsen's work (and reactions to it) highlight that many scholars in Pagan studies are aware of the issues that I explore throughout this project, including how researchers position themselves, how scholars construct data, and how labels help legitimize communities. However, that reactions to Davidsen were rather divided reveals that issues of what constitutes good scholarship, and therefore if or how the field ought to address certain issues, are hardly a settled matter.

Where to Go from Here: Issues of Concern in Pagan Studies

Reflecting the complex issues that shape this field, the following section outlines a roadmap that the rest of this dissertation follows. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework behind my research. Legitimacy is a core concept that guides this project, but one with complex meanings. This chapter explains what I mean by legitimacy and the multiple ways in which legitimation operates within Pagan studies. This chapter also discusses how I adopt social movement theory to understand how knowledge systems develop within academia. Chapter 3 introduces my research methods. Drawing on discourse analysis of publications, interviews with

a number of Pagan studies scholars, review of online media, and other sources, this chapter explains where my data come from, and how they were analyzed. Following this, I proceed thematically through different areas of interest in Pagan studies. Since I examine issues that are already prominent in Pagan studies discourse, I will briefly introduce the topics of chapters 4 through 8 by providing context on what *other* scholars consider the most pressing issues facing Pagan studies.

One issue is academic respectability. “A number of academics studying modern magical beliefs,” writes Doyle White, for example, “have . . . reported facing opposition from colleagues who view such subjects as a pointless area of enquiry” (2016c, 177-178). Paganism’s marginality contributes to an impression among some non-specialists that this religious community does not merit serious analysis. While this attitude is gradually changing, some scholars share that colleagues are rarely motivated to learn about Paganism or integrate the field’s perspectives into their work. Although this lack of interest likely also affects other small sub-fields, more concerning for Pagan studies are harsher sentiments that occasionally surface. Doyle White and Feraro share that colleagues occasionally deride their work as ““Harry Potter studies”” (2019, 9). Such concerns of viability or wider relevance are not unique to this field. Indeed, this is a common struggle that many emergent fields face, making the various attempts to establish Pagan studies relevant to other fields. Looking to other sub-fields as a guide, Pagan studies has reached some important benchmarks (books, courses, a peer-reviewed journal), but lacks others (associations, departments, *multiple* journals). Since many other fields are in the same boat regarding institutional development, Pagan studies is informative for how scholars navigate the liminal position between area of specialization and field. Struggles to have Pagans (and Pagan studies) considered a valid area of study is a trajectory that I trace throughout this project, but

especially in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 looks at formal ways by which Pagan studies enters academia, through the AAR Pagan Studies Unit, *The Pomegranate*, and a Pagan seminary. Chapter 5 explores less direct ways by which Pagan studies enters academia, including topic-specific courses and a series of what I term para-academic conferences.¹⁵

Another challenge is the insider/outsider debate. Highlighting the diversity in identity among scholars, Pagan studies comprises people who were practising Pagans for years before conducting research, people with no involvement, some who became Pagans during their fieldwork, and others who self-identify vaguely, as having ‘Pagan sensibilities,’ but not identifying outright as a Pagan. Further, since many Pagans are well-read and avidly consume research about Paganism, there is ongoing (at times acrimonious) dialogue between scholars and practitioners (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 487). While some scholars consider this practitioner audience an advantage for the field, disagreements sometimes become heated. Finally, some argue that the nature of Pagan rituals is such that researchers simply cannot be outsiders, making personal involvement prerequisite (487). Such issues, discussed in chapter 6, produce hotly contested discussions over the insider/outsider debate and appropriate relationships to the community being researched.

Terminological issues also present challenges. “Pagan studies scholars have been unable to agree on what ‘contemporary Paganism’ actually is,” writes Doyle White, further critiquing “the field’s inability to decide on whether it should focus solely on the study of contemporary Paganism or expand into the study of a huge range of religious movements that can be placed into the rubric of ‘paganism’” (2016c, 196). Representing one way by which scholars try to

15. These spaces are grouped as less direct due to the variance between, for example, a course about Pagans at one university versus another, or between a professional academic conference and the ones discussed in this chapter.

legitimize Paganism, expanding what topics Pagan studies actually *studies* often “serves the cause of contemporary Paganism rather than the critical analysis of religion” (196). A related concern is what Doyle White calls the “issue of due weight,” noting that feminist Witchcraft has “witnessed academic study disproportionate to its actual size within Paganism,” while other sub-groups “have witnessed basically no academic investigation so far” (196). Studying particular sub-groups can craft a particular image of Paganism. Chapter 7 explores issues of terminology and classification. By interrogating claims that Paganism was the fastest-growing religion, Paganism’s tenuous relationship with NRM studies, and more recent attempts to classify Paganism as an Indigenous religion, this chapter explores how descriptions can position Paganism in particular ways.

Since Paganism is often “poorly understood or stigmatized by the general public,” this can lead scholars to feel responsible for debunking prejudices and correcting misperceptions (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 487). This concern is shared by many who study new religions. In some cases, scholars must take on explicit roles as advocates, speaking to media, courts, and government bodies in cases where Pagans are marginalized. Chapter 8 explores how scholars navigate various concomitant concerns in this alternative venue for scholarship.

Although I recognize that Pagan studies is a small field, seemingly of little interest to scholars engaged in other areas, this project is relevant to scholars in religious studies and in academia more broadly. The issues explored in this project are not unique to Pagan studies. Fields large and small, new and old, struggle with issues of advocacy, identity, insularity, interdisciplinarity, and navigating appropriate approaches to scholarship. By analyzing a single field, this project explores issues including the insider/outsider debate, how definitions and boundaries are constructed, determining the public function of scholarship, and navigating

challenges to establish (and sustain) respectability and credibility. Pagan studies offers a case study to explore in explicit detail issues which have broader relevance in academia.

Situating Myself and this Study

If researching Pagan studies has taught me anything, it is the importance of situating oneself in relationship to one's work. I wish to close this chapter by offering reflections on my own situatedness relative to this project. I began my PhD with little awareness of Paganism, let alone the entire scholarly domain dedicated to this community. Although trained in religious studies as an undergraduate, and exploring New Religious Movements during my Master's, my interests resided in the sociology of knowledge, and how communities use scholarship to legitimize themselves or denounce opponents. Initially proposing an exploration of the development of a different academic sub-field, my supervisor nudged me in the direction of Pagan studies.

Having barely heard of Paganism when I began my PhD, it is unsurprising that I was not affiliated with any Pagan communities. I am still not involved in any Pagan groups, nor do I possess what some call Pagan sensibilities. My interest in Paganism is purely as a case study to explore larger issues. To assume the role of the sufficiently detached researcher, it was my intention when beginning this project to not even become involved in Pagan studies, instead hoping to remain a fly on the wall with an active research agenda in other fields. However, I have since developed interests, presented research, and published in this field. Further, I now recognize that my earlier concerns about remaining distanced were thoroughly misguided. I do not believe that belonging to this field (or even belonging to Paganism) would change this project substantially. However, due to my own involvement as a Pagan studies scholar, I must

also acknowledge my positionality as a researcher. Certain trends that I criticize, or what I propose as better or proper approaches to research reflect my own biases. While I believe that allies in broader scholarship validate my opinions, such issues are hardly a settled matter. Mine is simply one perspective on the approach that one should take to research.

My narrow focus on this field results from numerous factors. I selected Pagan studies in part due to feasibility. To make analysis manageable, I selected a sub-field that is fairly small and relatively new, allowing me to deeply engage with much of the field's published research. A related factor was Pagan studies' timeline. This field was only established within the last forty years, offering a relatively brief academic history that can be traced within the confines of this project, and offering access to many of the figures responsible for major developments.

Exploring this recently emergent sub-field also, admittedly, presents certain disadvantages. It is not necessarily clear whether my observations reflect what Pagan studies will continue to be moving forward. For instance, many scholars who played major roles in establishing this branch of scholarship have now passed or retired. I am optimistic that this field's trajectory seems clear, but acknowledge that there is no such guarantee, as a new guard may seek to radically change directions. Another disadvantage of my study is that Pagan studies lacks the same institutional visibility as other fields. Fields such as Islamic studies are thoroughly institutionalized, with dedicated institutes or programs. Even smaller schools will likely have a professor specializing in this area, and "Introduction to Islam" courses are fairly standard. Studying a more obscure field means that I may inadvertently overlook contributors to Pagan studies. Simply put, finding all Pagan studies scholars is more difficult than identifying everyone affiliated with U of T's Institute of Islamic Studies or everyone who teaches "Introduction to Islam" across North America. While some scholars list Paganism as a research interest on their

institution's website, others simply list "feminist theory" or "NRMs." Although certain scholars have a career-long interest in the field, I also encountered texts from scholars with broader research interests who published a single paper on Pagan ritual. Without prominent institutional homes, some scholars or publications may have been overlooked in my exploration of where Pagan studies exists.

Scholars have traced the development of much larger and more formally institutionalized fields, including Black studies, Jewish studies, and religious studies. My project is informed by these past studies, which highlight patterns in the ways that fields typically develop, or challenges that many fields experience. Again, despite the occasional disadvantages of studying a field that is in the midst of institutionalization, and still on the road to legitimacy, my approach also has distinct advantages. One advantage of Pagan studies is the self-awareness of the scholars involved. Studying the construction of the world religions discourse in the long nineteenth century, Masuzawa argues, "Particularly in moments of conceptual difficulty or ideational 'fix,'" implicit issues can "burst into visibility," adding, "this happens not only in dialogues and debates among several interlocutors, but also in the contemplative monologue of a single individual" (2005, 30). As emergent fields are developing, significant debates are explicitly acknowledged. When approaching scholars with my topic, I rarely needed to explain why issues of identity or legitimacy matter in scholarship. Instead, many were eager to discuss these issues and launched into sharing their perspectives. Similarly, many publications actively reflect on key issues that I explore. Pagan studies presented a willingness to expose and explore these issues.

Another advantage to observing this field's development as it unfolds is that in more established fields, processes of legitimation have often become hidden as natural. How many different religions should be covered in an introductory university course? Should scholars

studying Jews and Hindus be presenting their work in the same conference session, or at different ones? In which journal(s) should research about evangelical Christians be published? Better yet, what exactly is an evangelical Christian? Certain choices, behaviours, and structures have become obscured by the nature of habit. Highlighting the choices that scholars have made in more recent years, or indeed, are in the process of making in this nascent field's development, make this study of academia both complementary to, and in some cases, superior, to previous studies.

Finally, by researching Pagan studies, I also hope to affect the field in some way. Masuzawa suggests that at present, it seems gratuitous "to challenge the reality of religion or to question these familiar truisms" (2). However, amid the nineteenth century, the end product of the world religions discourse was not inevitable. During periods of growth, fields may change in response to critique or introspection. By tracing an intellectual debate that is happening at present, this project can actively intervene in the field's development.

Chapter 2 – Academic Fields and Tactics of Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a guiding concept of this project. Beyond simply acknowledging that Paganism is a legitimate religion, legitimacy encompasses how parties come to recognize a group in a particular way. Describing why Pagans draw on ancient mythology, for example, Anna Fisk suggests that this helps Pagans “justify, or make more profound, their own personal spiritual relations” (2017, 33). I use legitimacy to describe a similar process which occurs through scholarship, encompassing such tasks as justifying, validating, or making Pagan beliefs, practices, and identities more profound. Being considered legitimate is something that religions must accomplish to gain converts, keep followers, shape public opinion, or appease government authorities (Lewis 2003, 12). These directions for legitimacy also overlap. Legitimacy reinforces why a particular religion appeals to someone. Since communities that are stigmatized may struggle to gain or keep members, public opinion is also important. By appeasing government authorities, religions gain certain benefits (tax-exempt status, chaplains in public institutions). In a cyclical fashion, chaplains or positive public opinion may help attract or keep members.

Communities produce and promote knowledge about themselves (or about other groups) to shape their self-perceptions and how they are viewed by others. Popular culture also greatly influences what the average person knows about a given group. The academic study of contemporary Paganism is simply one facet within a larger process of knowledge construction, or one area where legitimation occurs. Scholars produce “social knowledge,” or statements about the actions, behaviours, and outlooks of people and/or groups (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011, 3). Complex scholarly discourses, such as what groups constitute the “World Religions,” or how to describe any particular group, are unimportant to what Berger and Luckmann call the person in the street. However, scholars who describe Paganism as a “nature religion” (or any comparable descriptor)¹ build on complex discourses, constructing a particular image of Paganism. Scholars reinforce, justify, or validate certain perspectives, and deliver such knowledge to practitioners, lawmakers, or broader society.

Scholars’ ability to be one party (among many) constructing knowledge about Paganism is due to social prestige. Amy Hale suggests that “scholarly authority itself confers legitimacy on a subject or population” (2013, 154). James R. Lewis adds, “the general populace gives science . . . a level of respect and prestige enjoyed by few other social institutions” (2012a, 208). Similarly, Berger and Luckmann explain that while the average person may not understand a telephone’s inner workings, people know how to make calls, or more importantly, who to contact if or when their phone stops working. Religious studies scholars represent a group of experts who simplify and/or explain complex phenomena and deliver this knowledge to others.

For Berger and Luckmann, conversations and everyday interactions maintain reality (152) while language transmits “accumulations of meaning” across generations (37). Admittedly, I

1. Nature religion represents one core feature (out of many possibilities) commonly attributed to Paganism. Other core elements include Paganism being distinctly feminist or polytheistic.

bend the term conversation to apply it to academia. In scholarship, conversation – the most common means of discourse – includes teaching, publications, and conference presentations. Teaching offers one example of how scholars help establish what Paganism is. Students might be uninterested in a coven’s complex dynamics. Indeed, a fraction of university students (an already small fraction of society) will even take a course that discusses Pagans. However, in courses where Pagans appear, scholars produce and transmit “recipe knowledge” (42), shaping the most essential, accessible information about Paganism. For instance, a scholar who studied one coven over several years refines their field notes down into a 200-page manuscript. A teacher preparing a lecture for their “Women and Religion” course might skim this book, summarizing what they consider most relevant in thirty PowerPoint slides. Students might jot down two pages of lecture notes. Finally, a student might tell their friends that they recently learned about Wicca, “a cool religion that empowers women.”

In scholarship, habitualization, or patterns of repeated actions that emerge over time (53), describes how communities are described, defined, and categorized. Taxonomy shapes how people think about and act towards different groups, as arbitrary descriptions come to be perceived as essential. Academic organizations support the “ritualization of knowledge categories” defining and sorting what counts as essential information (Gumport and Snyderman 2002, 379). Departments, for instance, declare what knowledge about a topic is most relevant, and how that knowledge should be organized, taught, or studied. However, descriptions can also reinforce dominant ideologies (Masuzawa 2005; Gottschalk 2012; Chidester 2013; Vial 2016; Morgenstein Fuerst 2017). Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst traces how job advertisements for specialists in Islam cement ideas of “‘authentic’ Islam” (2020, 916) by centering certain regions (the Middle East), subjects (texts), and languages (Arabic). Suggesting that specialists must be experts in

these areas – as opposed to other regions (North America), subjects (lived religion), or languages (Indonesian) – essentializes a definition of Islam. Determining who gets hired shapes what students learn, what knowledge graduates possess, and what work is valued in religious studies.

Paganism itself is the product of habitualization. As scholars describe Wicca, Heathenry, and other groups as forms of Paganism, Paganism becomes recognized as an umbrella category encompassing those groups.² Habitualization also concerns how Paganism is positioned relative to other groups. If scholars compare Paganism with New Age religions, then Pagans become associated with certain accompanying perceptions. However, scholars describing Paganism as a “native faith movement” or likening Paganism to an Indigenous religion (a more recent habitualization) brings new accompanying perceptions. Granted, Pagan studies does not train specialists in the same way as, say, Islamic studies programs, which means that comparisons between this and more established fields can only be drawn so far. However, the titles of courses and publications, and the content therein, dictates what knowledge about Pagans is considered most important, and which forms of Paganism are most important and authentic.

To explore how academic fields develop and legitimize knowledge, I draw on social movement theory. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison define social movements as “moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities and even ideals” (1991, 4). Similarly, Scott Frickel and Neil Gross define Scientific/Intellectual Movements (SIMs) as “collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects” (2005, 206).³ I merge these concepts to understand how scholars legitimize particular ideas about Paganism. Social movement

2. Indeed, within Paganism, certain groups used this broader label to strengthen the perception “that hundreds of diverse and even contradictory groups were part of an eclectic movement with certain common goals” (Adler 2006, 329).

3. SIMs *resemble* social movements (205), but generally involve/reach fewer people and present fewer risks for participants (225).

theorists identify the temporary and episodic nature of movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 4; Frickel and Gross 2005, 28), but also that movements can produce knowledge that “endure[s] for generations” (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011, 23). Academic fields are marked by temporary events – conferences, a special journal volume, courses – which briefly capture people’s attention. However, through conferences held each year, journals released every season, or regularly offered courses, fields can produce knowledge that endures over time.

A primary outcome of social movements (and especially academic fields) is knowledge production (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 94; Gumpert and Snyderman 2002, 379; Frickel and Gross 2005, 206). I am specifically interested in “whatever passes for ‘knowledge,’” regardless of ultimate validity (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 3). In religious studies, what passes for knowledge includes how various traditions, or the concept of religion itself, are described and understood. Labels relate to broader issues or ideas, and represent “socially constructed discourses” (Ellsworth 2019, 196). With regards to labelling food for example, Jason W. M. Ellsworth notes that calling something fair trade elevates that product’s perception as being healthier, higher quality, and more ethical (regardless of its actual production process). Descriptors attributed to Paganism (e.g., feminism, environmentalism) are also socially constructed discourses, which establish identities or explain why this group is important. Descriptors also position the community in specific ways, legitimizing the community as, say, feminist or environmentally friendly. When certain definitions are used in publications or classrooms, the idea that Paganism represents a nature religion becomes what passes for knowledge, thereby legitimizing the community in the minds of those that value environmentalism.

Finally, social movements work towards direct and indirect outcomes (Cress and Snow 2000, 1065). Indirect outcomes include “changes in public perception” (1065). While scholars rarely even mention having explicit goals, many hope to see Pagans become better recognized in society. Scholars who advocate for states to grant Pagan inmates certain rights (though this is rarer) help Pagans secure direct benefits. Although Pagan communities work towards direct and indirect outcomes in their own ways, Pagan studies is a parallel social movement that helps legitimize Pagan communities. Approaching academic fields as social movements involves exploring how scholarship interacts with multiple audiences, transforming how states evaluate religion, how practitioners understand their own identities, and how scholars in other fields understand concepts and categories.

Overlapping Spheres of Legitimacy

That tactics of legitimacy occur in scholarship does not imply that scholars devise strategies like business executives develop marketing strategies. Instead, legitimation tactics often emerge spontaneously (Lewis 2003, 13). While common legitimation strategies that religions use include charismatic, rational, and traditional appeals to authority (Weber 1968), religions also require societal legitimacy, or a positive public perception (Lewis 2003, 15). The specific ways that scholars offer Paganism legitimacy occupy the succeeding chapters. This chapter outlines three spheres of legitimacy that Pagan studies addresses – internal, external, and academic – offering brief examples of how they operate.

Internal Legitimacy

Members who belong to a particular religion will generally consider it legitimate, valid, or worthwhile as a belief system or social institution. Legitimations provide comfort by explaining how the world functions, and why things function a particular way (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Does a religion resonate with a person's values? Do rituals produce their promised results? Are there social benefits to belonging in that religion? Internal legitimacy concerns why and how people are attracted to Paganism, explaining, for example, how people who enjoy nature are attracted to a religion with seasonal, outdoor rituals.

Pagans legitimize their identities without scholarship's aid in numerous ways. Léon A. van Gulik argues that homecoming and spontaneous exegetical reflections, for example, offer Pagans self-legitimation. Allowing members to "imply the naturalness of one's spirituality," many Pagans describe a fascination with mythology or nature from childhood, and suggest that rather than converting to Paganism, they are simply coming home to something they always possessed internally (2019, 164). "Spontaneous exegetical reflection" describes profound experiences during rituals, which reinforce such beliefs as the immanence of multiple divinities. Various claims about Paganism also shape how Pagans understand their position in the world. Following the civil rights movement, "discrimination and victimization became part of the mechanism for claiming a legitimate identity" (Magliocco 2005, 78). Presenting Paganism as an Indigenous religion, some Pagans assert a marginalized status, attempt to forge bonds with other groups, and elevate Paganism's relevance in contemporary affairs (Gilmore 2018). Through these and other means, Pagans validate their identities as sincere and profound.

While communities already have ways of legitimizing their identities and beliefs, some academic fields "have strong connections to broader social movements" and work *with*

communities to produce knowledge (Arthur 2009a, 84). Asian American studies, for example, works within academia to disseminate knowledge, but also works in and with micromobilization sites *outside* academia (77). Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur adds that many fields use the structure of academic disciplines as a strategic tool to mobilize energy towards such goals as creating knowledge, increasing visibility, and gaining political, economic, and social power (76). Professional associations, institutes, journals, and foundations offer tools which help movements integrate knowledge claims into academia (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018, 2). Black studies represents another field that emerged from a social movement, as civil rights advocates interacted with universities, demanding new policies, courses, faculty, and departments (Rojas 2007, 10). Hale notes that like many other area studies fields, Pagan studies “arose out of an academic relationship with a community” and remains connected with “the changing identity politics . . . and the attempts of the Pagan movement to gain legitimacy” (2013, 153). Pagans engage with this field as insider scholars, informants, or readers of research, shaping the knowledge that this field produces.

Academia’s cultural capital helps validate the claims that scholars make, corroborating and reassuring Pagans of their self-perceptions. One way that scholars offer Pagans internal legitimacy is through teaching. Much as job postings for Islamic studies professors legitimize authentic Islam as being Middle Eastern, Arabic, and textual (Morgenstein Fuerst 2020), Hughes argues that Jewish studies occasionally functions to promote Judaism’s essence as monotheistic, ethical, and legal (2013, 122), and to make Jewish students “more Jewish” (105). Pagan studies is obviously a much smaller religion and field. However, scholars still play a role reifying, cementing, and legitimizing core characteristics that resonate with Pagans. Scholars share that Pagan students express feeling validated by hearing their perspectives reflected in an academic

setting. Some students even discover Paganism during their education, making Pagan studies a catalyst for religious exploration.

Pagans being a well-read community accentuates the internal legitimacy that scholars can offer (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 487).⁴ Suggesting that scholars are generally respected among Pagans, and shape outlooks, Fisk calls scholars “‘theologians’ of the Pagan movement” (2017, 22). Inspired by pre-Christian mythology, Pagans avidly consume literature in history, archaeology, and folklore (Tully 2011). Gerald Gardner (generally regarded as the creator of Wicca) drew on ideas that were “products of academic scholarship” (Hutton 2008, 262). Archaeology continues to shape the importance that Pagans attribute to particular sites (Cornish 2020, 416). Harrington notes that becoming Wiccan “re-awakened” her thirst for knowledge, exploring works in history, philosophy, and psychology, even before entering academia (2015, 181). Pagans have told historian Ronald Hutton that they were “first attracted to Wicca” or “reassured” in their beliefs after reading his work (2011a, 254). Hale, who targets her research at an “informed popular audience on esoteric or occult issues,” describes a tight “feedback loop” between academia and the Pagan community.⁵ Even Pagans who are not scholars are described as having an “academic mindset” with an interest in scholarly conversations.⁶ Scholars often told me that informants read much of the same academic work that they do themselves. Others shared that Pagans not only read research, but often use those studies “to highlight their legitimacy.”⁷

Pagans are also sometimes legitimized through the act of being studied. While few Pagans will read a given article in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, for the informants

4. Not only do Pagans often describe themselves as a well-read community, but surveys have found that Pagans tend to be more highly educated than the general American population (see for example Jorgensen and Russell 1999, 332; Berger 2019, 30).

5. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

6. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

7. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

involved, interactions with a scholar reinforce that one's community is worthy of academic study. Graham Harvey (2015) notes that some Pagans "relish the attention" and "feel that being [of] scholarly interest demonstrates legitimacy" (105). Describing his fieldwork experiences, Jefferson Calico notes, "some of my respondents just enjoyed being quoted and recognized."⁸ Wendy Griffin (2004) shares one participant offering the following response: "Thank you for doing this survey – it made me aware of how much more I want to incorporate nature into my personal rituals" (66). By exploring a topic, Griffin validated this belief, and even influenced how some practitioners would act moving forward.

Crossover between Pagan studies and Pagans also occurs through conferences. Many scholars present at conferences that cater to Pagan audiences. Harrington (2015) describes these events as processes of "knowledge transfer and exchange"; audiences offer constructive feedback while scholars bring "academic tools" into Paganism (187).⁹ Scholars are marked in such spaces *as scholars*, connoting expertise and prestige. When Sabina Magliocco, Tanya Lurhmann, and Sarah M. Pike presented on a PantheaCon panel in 2016, for example, the program biography listed their major publications and positions as professors. When presenting at Paganicon in 2018, Murphy Pizza's biography listed her recent book and described her as an "academic expert on new religions." Even those with less established academic reputations bolster their bios with such statements as "published work in many academic journals and anthologies" (PantheaCon 2012, 57), or "lectures to academic and esoteric audiences" (60).¹⁰

8. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019. Being an informant occasionally also motivates Pagans to enter academia. Revisiting his alma mater, Michael York "was astonished to find so many of the pagans I had studied for my dissertation" as students and teachers (2015, 119). One of these practitioners-turned-scholars, Vivianne Crowley, added that York "opened the college for pagans" (119), encouraging others to explore their religion from an academic perspective.

9. Harrington adds that when she presents, "academic contributions are warmly received" (187).

10. As chapter 5 discusses, these credentialing statements often serve to legitimize whatever knowledge that person shares in their presentation.

Appearing at conferences (and being marked as scholars) reinforce further ways that Pagan studies scholars interact with practitioners.

That many Pagan studies scholars are insiders further impacts internal legitimation. Academic discourse can reinforce a symbolic universe, most notably, the worldview of those conducting research. Religious studies itself presented the liberal Protestantism of nineteenth-century Europe as the enlightened worldview towards which all societies were progressing (Masuzawa 2005, 19). Pagan studies (like many other sub-fields) similarly serves to explain, justify, and legitimize a worldview that many scholars possess. One scholar describes a loose affiliation with Paganism when they entered university. Noting that they were always “a sociologically-inclined observer,” they add, “it was sort of a natural build-on, to reflect on that academically.”¹¹ Another scholar shares that being a Pagan entering religious studies “somehow felt like I could start to bring a sense of spirituality into the process,” adding, “even if what I was doing was not theology, there was still this feeling that it [spirituality] was somehow in the air as I was doing this research.”¹² This field gives Pagans a chance to explore questions that many were already exploring. Although one scholar’s personal views may not represent the entire Pagan community, many Pagan scholars reinforce their own identity through research.

Internal Legitimacy in Action

The examples I have used thus far to highlight how scholars legitimize Pagan beliefs and identities have generally been liberal values, such as feminism or environmentalism. I acknowledge that aligning Paganism with these or similar values would not necessarily

11. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

12. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

legitimize Pagans in the eyes of, say, more conservative, right-leaning Americans. Instead, I suggest that scholars facilitate legitimation by reinforcing the ways in which many Pagans wish to perceive themselves. Helen Berger's recent survey data offers fitting examples of Pagan self-perceptions. Berger finds, for instance, that 74.6% of solitary practitioners and 81.7% of group practitioners self-define as environmentalist (2019, 133). Although the numbers are slightly lower, feminism also appears to be an important value, with 57% of solitaires and 64.2% of group practitioners self-identifying as feminist (136). Finally, 69.6% of solitaires and 76% of group practitioners self-identify as gay rights activists (141). As Berger notes, whether one actually considers someone to be, say, an environmentalist, depends on the criteria used (131). For instance, does this mean that one recycles, that one regularly attends demonstrations, or that one makes more concerted efforts to reduce their carbon footprint? However, for the purposes of understanding internal legitimation, it is relevant that a majority of Pagans identify themselves as progressive, meaning that scholars who align Paganism with liberal values are reinforcing self-perceptions.

Through claims asserted in research, scholars act as gatekeepers in and for the Pagan community (van Gulik 2019, 157-8). For example, mirroring the core Pagan values put forth by Lewis and Pizza, Charmaine Sonnex, Chris A. Roe, and Elizabeth C. Roxburgh write, "tolerance and equity are key values within Paganism" (2020, 10). The idea that tolerance and equity are "key values" might clash with intra-community strife (Reid 2006) or racism in Heathenry (Gardell 2005). However, the authors above validate particular core values, which offers internal legitimation for Pagans who see themselves as tolerant and equitable.

Sonnex, Roe, and Roxburgh also cite Adler's characterization of Paganism as decentralized and individualistic (2006, 3), adding that this establishes individuality as a defining

characteristic (2020, 14). However, Adler only articulates how Pagans wish to be perceived. In contrast to emic narratives of individuality, Áine Warren's (2020) examination of Pagan altars on YouTube finds that prominent influencers shape which deities, materials, or practices are considered authentic (2020). In other words, authority still exists in Paganism, just in different ways. Ignoring this complexity, Sonnex, Roe, and Roxburgh position emic claims regarding individuality as objective facts about Paganism.¹³

Finally, the authors add, "the embodiment inherent in Pagan rituals can provide LGBTQ+ folks with a spirituality that celebrates their sexuality and allows them to see it as a source of joy" (9). Although Paganism's openness to LGBTQ+ identities is true in a general sense, acceptance is not universal, with trans exclusion in particular creating conflict in some communities (Mueller 2017). Further, since certain rituals sacralize penetrative sex between men and women, the embodiment in such rituals does not necessarily celebrate queer sexuality. Glossing over Paganism's diversity, these scholars assert claims that position Pagans in a positive, affirming manner. Rather than capturing this complexity, this depiction reinforces practitioners' self-perceptions of what makes Paganism desirable.

To shape how Pagans understand their identity, scholars can also position Paganism in particular ways relative to other religions. Harvey writes, "Ritual, for most Pagans, is not 'mere repetition' performed in ignorance of proper beliefs, but is the main business of Pagan gatherings" (2012, 402). Implying that in other religions, rituals are in fact mere repetition elevates Pagans as more deeply engaged with their practices. York calls Paganism "*the* quintessential material religion," adding, "while all religions are material to some extent, paganism is the spirituality that actually celebrates the tangible" (2019, 1). Essentialized, often

13. This issue also shapes New Age scholarship, which uncritically accepts (and then promotes) an emic emphasis on self-authority (Wood 2007, 36-7).

flattering definitions elevate and legitimize Paganism. Since Paganism becomes the quintessential *x* religion, such descriptions also implicitly devalue other religions claiming to possess those characteristics.

Especially concerning is how scholars sometimes demonize other religions to elevate Paganism. Comparing Paganism and New Age, York writes, “despite its transcendental emphasis, New Age spirituality is more endorsing of modern consumerism,” while Paganism “eschew[s] much of contemporary Western materialistic culture” (26). Elsewhere, perhaps to elevate how Paganism embraces tolerance, York argues that the Boston Marathon bombings “illustrate an Islamic propensity toward extremism that is contrary to the desired spirit of Western civilization” (10), adding, “the fanatic extremes of Islam . . . express no tolerance of difference and seek instead the elimination if not obliteration of any and all dissenting perspectives” (23). York aligns Paganism with positive values and positions Islam as a threat.

Further, while York makes “fanatic extremes” part of Islam’s essential make-up, he ignores existent forms of extremism and violence in Paganism. Other scholars position far-right Heathenry, for example, as misappropriations of proper Pagan values or symbols. Suggesting that the label of Paganism has been claimed or misused (Maxwell 2020, 12-3) legitimizes Pagan activities as fundamentally positive, and excuses most Pagans from the objectionable actions of other Pagans. Outside of formal publications, one scholar shares how even casual conversations among scholars can legitimize certain perspectives: “last time I was at the AAR, I kept hearing this phrase, other Pagan scholars were talking about ‘those racist Heathens,’ you know? Almost like, creating an other? You know, ‘those are the ones who are causing all the trouble, and they’re not like us . . . we’re not involved in any of that.’”¹⁴ Casting Heathens as an other makes

14. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019.

them the sole parties responsible for negative traits within Paganism. Reinforcing the “good, moral, and decent fallacy,” whereby religion is positioned as a fundamental source for good in society (Cowan and Bromley 2015, 8), scholars construct an image of authentic Paganism which is generally positive. By emphasizing virtues, demonizing other religions, and ignoring inconsistencies within their categorizations, scholars support Paganism’s internal legitimacy.

External Legitimacy

Acceptance in the public eye is also important for religions. Negative presumptions place some Pagans in fear of being fired, harassed, or denied certain privileges due to their religious affiliation. How non-Pagans evaluate Paganism, or what I call external legitimacy, can involve governments granting a group tax-exempt status, institutions appointing chaplains, or police permitting practitioners to conduct a ritual without interference. External legitimacy is significant because tax breaks can help groups operate, chaplains help incarcerated members to practise their religion, and positive perceptions help members comfortably exist without harassment.

Through local interactions, activism, or media outreach, communities already advocate for their own legitimacy. Scholars simply offer further resources for external legitimation. By positioning themselves as experts on certain topics, scholars function similar to technicians (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 43). Technicians recognize that technology is complex. Therefore, when asked to repair something, rather than extensively describe a device’s inner workings, technicians tell a customer what they absolutely need to know. This analogy describes, for example, a scholar telling prison officials what kind of tools might be required in a Pagan ritual.

Despite perceptions of scholars as objective knowledge producers however, scholars are “political, contingent, [and] culturally bound agents” (Dorrough Smith 2019, 4). Describing how

scholars choose what they consider worthy of attention, Leslie Dorrough Smith writes, “the world is filled with all sorts of random, miscellaneous phenomena, and we are the ones who pick out some of it and put our focus there” (4). Sifting through a particularly amorphous phenomenon, Pagan studies scholars construct the category of Paganism as data. Constructing data can also legitimize Paganism in particular ways. Decisions about which elements to highlight (and which to downplay, gloss over, or simply ignore) craft a certain image of Paganism. Berger and Luckmann suggest that the “‘formula’ character” of recipe knowledge ensures memorability (70). Statements like “Pagans worship nature” are simple and memorable. While perhaps less accurate than saying “some Pagans place an emphasis on nature by conducting rituals outdoors (weather permitting) or focusing on seasonal changes,” the former is simpler, easier to remember, and more forgiving to a scholar’s word count.

Legitimation is partly shaped by how groups have been delegitimized (Hjelm 2006, 37). Describing research about Pagans from the 1980s and 90s, when the Satanic Panic exacerbated fears of new religions, Pike suggests that most scholars sought “to show why individuals involved with the occult are ‘rational’ and thus ‘legitimate’ rather than evil or insane” (1996, 353). By distinguishing harmless from destructive rituals; black from white magic; and Satanists from Witches (354), scholars translate little-known groups to outsiders, outlining how normal and safe they truly are. Though initially reacting to a particularly hostile context for new religions, what Pike calls a “defensive agenda” (355) persists in Pagan studies. Pike’s book (2004b) begins, “My hope is that this work may help to dispel negative stereotypes that have been perpetuated by the media, anticult groups, and religious competitors” (xiii). Other publications announce that Pagans are not just an ancient myth or pop culture fad, but a “World Religion” (York 2003, 2016, 2019; Davy 2007). “Legitimizing accounts” often draw on broader

cultural contexts to ensure relevance (Creed, Scully, and Austin 2002, 481). Scholars therefore offer legitimacy by noting how Paganism resembles mainstream religions.

External Legitimacy in Action

In rare instances, Pagan studies scholars help Pagans secure tangible benefits. Hutton was appointed as the Historical Commissioner of English Heritage in 2009, making him “the public advocate of history’s importance to the British nation, as well as advising the government on all aspects of the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of the historical fabric of the British Isles” (Evans 2009, 35). Hutton attained this position due to his sterling reputation as a scholar. His expertise placed him in a position to advocate for the Pagan community, shaping access to landmarks or intervening in reburial disputes. Although this is a rare position for a scholar, it offers one example of how scholars can have tangible impacts on communities. This section briefly explores several examples of how scholars more commonly provide external legitimacy, namely, through exposure and destigmatization.

In the most general sense, scholars support Paganism’s external legitimacy by introducing more people to this community. Scholars also often alert others to the needs that Pagans may have, or emphasize that Pagans are misunderstood by mainstream society. Meg Yardley validates Paganism as a community that merits respect and attention in social work settings, even highlighting clues (terminology, holidays, and “Celtic, Norse, or Goddess-related jewelry”) to let social workers know when they are working with Pagans (2008, 331). Offering general advice on how to work with Pagans, Yardley adds that athames (a dagger used in Pagan rituals) are not especially dangerous items, but rather should be assessed as one would treat any

sharp household object (332). Yardley distances Pagans from stigmatizing assumptions and endorses Pagan symbols, tools, and identities as legitimate.

While many scholars briefly reference examples of Pagan workplace discrimination (Barner-Barry 2005; Cowan and Bromley 2015, 176-7), Manuel J. Tejada quantifies such experiences through his study. He finds that all participants report concerns over how society views Pagans, and that eighty-eight percent of interviewees are anxious about their faith being disclosed (2015, 96). Tejada offers external legitimacy by suggesting that managers intervene to curb workplace discrimination (106-7).

At other times, scholars legitimize Paganism by debunking misperceptions. Writing about Pagan end-of-life preferences, Marilyn Smith-Stoner and Reverend Nora Cedarwind Young write, “Pagan practitioners do not believe the Devil (Satan) exists” (2007, 281). Ignoring that some Pagans do identify as Satanists (Berger 2019, 35), the authors legitimize Paganism as harmless. This represents defensive othering; distancing Pagans from a stigma, while subtly reinforcing that Satan worshippers might indeed be bad. Citing the Wiccan rede and the Threefold Law,¹⁵ the authors add, “Magic is never practiced to produce a negative effect on any person or any thing” (281-2). This claim ignores that these ‘laws’ are specific to Wicca (while the article is about Paganism), that such rules do not actually prohibit practitioners from causing harm, and that harmful magic is sometimes performed by some who call themselves Pagans (Magliocco 2020). By ignoring such complexities, these scholars destigmatize Paganism, offering external legitimacy.

15. The Wiccan rede states, ‘An it harm none, do what thou wilt,’ while the Threefold Law suggests that whatever energy a person projects will return to them three times over. Both are common (though not universal) beliefs among Wiccans. Although the precise wording of these creeds vary slightly from practitioner to practitioner, for one more complete explanation of these principles, see for example Smith-Stoner and Young, 2007, 281-2.

Analyzing court cases that reveal anti-Pagan discrimination, Bradford S. Stewart seeks to help members receive better treatment (2011, 136). Stewart legitimizes certain claims simply by defining Paganism: “Neo-Pagans consider observance of the Mother Goddess to reflect the purest and most ancient form of spirituality” (139). This validates the belief of the Pagan author that Stewart is citing and gives Paganism traditional legitimacy. Stewart also portrays Paganism in the most positive possible manner, suggesting Paganism’s “central tenet of harmony with nature inherently promotes peaceful behavior and benevolent use of powers,” adding, “it would be impermissible to manipulate another person with magic against their will” (140). Quoting another Pagan leader, Stewart writes, “Black magick has no place in Wicca and those who claim otherwise are imposters” (149). By uncritically repeating broad, essentializing, and generally positive emic assertions, Stewart promotes Paganism as good, moral, and decent. Although Stewart’s description of Paganism is both uncritical and inaccurate, he provides external legitimation by destigmatizing Pagans and extolling Paganism’s virtues.

Beyond the more explicit legitimating accounts discussed above, even choice of topic can shape Paganism’s image and offer external legitimacy. Describing Pizza’s research on intergenerational Paganism (2014), Erik Ewing-Meyer notes that such work can “have a positive impact in that it makes Paganism seem more family-oriented, and wholesome.”¹⁶ Although scholars who research Pagan festivals (Pike 2001) or popular music (Weston and Bennett 2013) do not necessarily sensationalize Paganism, research on Pagan families (Kermani 2013; McClure 2017) enhance external legitimacy simply by offering new representations. In like manner, scholars who specifically study inclusive Heathen communities (Davy 2020) or queer Pagans

16. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

(Lepage 2013) construct a particular image of Paganism by virtue of where they direct their lens. Highlighting certain aspects can offer destigmatization and enhance external legitimacy.

Academic Legitimacy

The legitimation that Pagan studies facilitates is enhanced by how the broader public regards academia. Building on the ‘strong program’ in the sociology of knowledge, Frickel and Gross refuse to accept “the intrinsic truth of an idea as the sole cause of its popularity” (2005, 208). Instead, they argue, ideas are “established and certified through social processes” (208). Knowledge claims are supported by influential people holding prestigious positions. Educational and cultural privilege supports scholars’ role in society, offering social capital (Owen 2019, 3). Scholars are presumed to be experts on certain topics and their claims are perceived as objective, scientific, and authoritative (Lewis 2012a; Hale 2013). However, while scholars can potentially legitimize communities or ideas through their work, it is not guaranteed that colleagues will always respect (or even permit) such work. For the claims that scholars make to have the authority engendered by social prestige, the field in which they work, topic that they research, or places in which they publish must be recognized as academically legitimate. The question of a field’s academic legitimacy amounts to asking: is this recognized as a valuable and suitably scientific pursuit?

Some scholars express a degree of marginalization based on their very choice of topic. Jenny Butler describes Pagan studies as existing on the “fringes of academia.”¹⁷ Whether navigating Research Ethics Boards or presenting research to colleagues and supervisors, some expressed challenges having their work taken seriously. Existing on the fringes of academia is

17. Jenny Butler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

certainly not a situation that is unique to Pagan studies, as many emergent fields struggle to be taken seriously in their early years. Due to prejudices against the topic and scholars involved, Noliwe M. Rooks notes that early critics of Black studies did not believe “it was possible for the field to produce scholarship of high quality” (2006, 68). New fields of inquiry earning the respect of broader academia is often a long process, involving various benchmarks along the way. Emergent fields often follow a trajectory of institutionalization, including conference presentations, publications, courses, associations, and in some cases, endowed chairs or entire departments (Rooks 2006, 38; Rojas 2007, 168). Throughout this process, scholars must convince colleagues that studying this new topic is a worthwhile and valid pursuit.

Regarding NRM studies, Lewis describes issues first convincing scholars to join the field: “most religion scholars were reluctant to further marginalize themselves by giving serious attention to what at the time seemed a transitory social phenomenon” (2003, 31). By studying NRMs (or in the case of Pagan studies, a single NRM) scholars potentially jeopardize their relevance, and in the case of early career scholars, their chances of getting a job. Griffin notes that part of her efforts always went into convincing colleagues that studying Paganism is worthwhile (2015, 96). Berger shares that her work was often delegitimized in subtle ways, through colleagues simply remarking that her topic was “cute” or more significantly, an inability to get grants and positions (2015, 132). Choosing to study Paganism, as opposed to more mainstream religions, forces scholars to “defend their topic more than their findings” (132). When fields focus on marginal communities, scholars may also face assumptions about motivations. Many anti-cultists criticized NRM scholars as “naïve and gullible” (Lewis 2003, 5), and only acting in the interests of the communities they study. Suggesting that the study of

marginal communities is compromised by advocacy or simply uninteresting to mainstream audiences hurts the perceived academic legitimacy of emergent fields like Pagan studies.

A lack of scholars hired as specialists is one potential indication that Pagan studies struggles with academic legitimacy. Highlighting further means by which scholars can struggle, Hutton recounts various challenges to his reputation following his choice to research Witchcraft: “I was not considered fit for positions of higher managerial responsibility or any honours, applications for research grants were rejected, invitations to give guest lectures and papers dried up” (Large and Hutton 2016, quoted in Doyle White and Feraro 2019, 8). Although already a respected historian, choosing to study the history of Paganism immediately downgraded Hutton’s perceived value. Adrian Ivakhiv (2015), who straddles Pagan studies and the more mainstream environmental studies, notes that while he has “rarely felt any outright hostility, dismissiveness, or discrimination” for researching Paganism, he has “felt a need to maintain a recognizably ‘environmental’ research profile” (199). Echoing the subtle dismissal experienced by many in Pagan studies, antagonism is rare, but scholars feel implicit pressures to align with more mainstream areas of study or cope with general disinterest.

Pagan Studies as Social Movement

How do scholars studying a niche topic get to a point where their work is more widely respected? Academic legitimacy is something that emergent fields must cultivate. Observing Pagan studies through the lens of social movement theory illuminates this process. Social movements are propelled by “movement intellectuals,” or individuals who articulate that movement’s “knowledge interests and cognitive identity” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 94). David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier suggest that social movements are not composed of

“narrowly focused unitary actors,” but rather include “formal organizations, informal networks, and unaffiliated individuals” oriented towards a common goal (1994, 277). They add, “while social movements are often explicitly identified with only one issue or set of issues, activists rarely are” (291). In regards to Pagan studies, some figures have formal positions as editors of a journal. Others have no formal position, but support the field by conducting research, and presenting their work in Pagan studies spaces. Finally, some simply find research about Pagans interesting and support the field in more indirect ways, such as subscribing to journals or attending conference sessions.¹⁸

Pagan studies therefore has a diverse collection of individuals in formal organizations, informal networks, and aligned with different issues, who support the growth of this area of study. Scholars are also diverse in terms of the disciplines to which they belong and their level of commitment. Most figures with whom I spoke situate themselves within religious studies, anthropology, or sociology. Some immediately list Pagan studies as their area of specialization, while others suggest folk religion or NRMs, with Paganism being one among many sub-interests. Attention to different interests may also shift over time. For example, Cowan’s *Cyberhenge* fits in Pagan studies, but other books do not (see for example 2008, 2010, 2018). Pike similarly has several ‘Pagan studies’ publications (2001, 2004b), but also situates her work in ritual or environmental studies. Clifton, editor of Pagan studies’ lone journal, held a teaching appointment that rarely intersected with Pagan or even religious studies. The contexts in which scholars exist (both geographically and the size or nature of their institution) also shape one’s work (Chang 1999, 183). While some scholars are encouraged to teach courses related to Paganism, others are discouraged from making Paganism a component of their curriculum. Some scholars are

18. Among these indirect supporters, some of these figures are not scholars, while some are scholars who primarily research other topics.

supported by their employer to travel and present at conferences, while others are not. Despite diversity among movement participants, collective identity (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 291), among people who consider this subject matter a worthwhile research topic, unites figures in Pagan studies.

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities suggests, "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006, 6). This quote, describing the growth of nationalism, also applies to academic fields. Concerning large disciplines, some consider themselves, say, anthropologists and perform certain tasks (conducting ethnography, teaching ANT-100) that offer a collective identity. There are also formal ways to belong to a discipline (degrees, membership in certain associations) which separate anthropologists from physicists. Despite some shared, tangible markers, however, fields are largely imagined. While scholars might know everyone in their department, one will never meet all other anthropologists. Regardless, scholars can imagine who anthropologists are, what they do, and how they are connected.

Anderson's emphasis on novels and newspapers facilitating the creation of nations is especially germane to academic fields (24-5). Anderson writes that print-capitalism "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others" (36). Concerning how scholars relate to colleagues, W. Michael Ashcraft writes, "scholars engage with the printed word, often without ever meeting the writers" (2018, 7). When speaking with NRM scholars about their colleagues, he adds that people reference those whom they met "face-to-face," but also "what they read, and how that influenced them" (7). Publications facilitate the growth and awareness of new fields. For instance, Tanya M. Luhmann's book represented the first anthropological monograph about a Pagan community

(1989). Subsequent scholars expanded on her work, producing a growing discourse specifically about Pagans (Berger 1999; Pike 2001; Magliocco 2004). Conferences, journals, and books allow further conversations to develop and enable scholars to describe the sub-field as a branch of study. Just as newspapers and novels tell people who belongs to their nation, and what their fellow citizens do, publications tell others what a Pagan is, what theories can explain Pagan phenomena, how to study them, and who else studies them.

Building Pagan Studies Hubs

Without a dedicated department or association, imagining is sometimes the only way that Pagan studies actually exists. Nevertheless, scholars have also developed some concrete spaces or hubs for research. Reflecting a common strategy for helping new scholarly domains be recognized as legitimate, scholars often use existing conferences, journals, associations, departments, and discourses to explore new topics (Allen 1993, 6).¹⁹ However, creating new spaces that cater specifically to a given topic generally marks “the emergence of [a] new academic field” (Allen 1993, 6). Specific hubs allow scholars to coalesce into a larger movement and help research be taken seriously.

While scholars have many options for where to present research about Pagans, the hubs I discuss below are distinct because they are exclusively homes to Pagan studies. I detail the history of these hubs in the following chapters, but a brief description here contextualizes their importance. The Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit (CPSPU) in the American Academy of Religion and *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* are the two most

19. Rather than build new programs from scratch, many Black studies programs, for example, were built on cross-listed faculty and students taking existing courses from different departments (Rojas 2007, 124).

traditional academic hubs. During the AAR's annual meeting, which hosts thousands of scholars, the CPSPU organizes several sessions of presentations. *The Pomegranate* is the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to Pagan studies, generally publishing biannual volumes. These hubs epitomize traditional academia, as submissions are peer-reviewed by a team of scholars, and both hubs are overseen by larger bodies (the AAR and Equinox publishing).

As spaces where like-minded others connect, and as outlets for scholarly discourse about a particular topic, these hubs play a significant role in Pagan studies. Frickel and Gross describe conferences as micromobilization sites or recruitment centres for sub-fields. Encountering other scholars studying the same topic presents influential others who “come to serve as gatekeepers, debating partners, sources of information . . . and collaborators” (2005, 219). Douglas Ezzy suggests that *The Pomegranate*, the Nature Religions Scholars Network (formed during an AAR meeting), and various other conferences “played a significant role” in him becoming a Pagan studies scholar (2015, 78). Unlike bigger journals (where Paganism potentially or infrequently appears), hubs are spaces where Paganism will definitely appear.²⁰ These hubs operate like bulletin boards for the sub-field, informing both dedicated and casual observers of key topics and trends. Specialists likely attend each relevant session at the AAR. For scholars with broader interests, who may be unable to stay plugged in to the field, scanning recent *Pomegranate* issues offers a quick, convenient way to see what has been happening.²¹ Finally, in addition to facilitating discourse, these hubs also cement the field's existence, in the minds of both scholars who study these communities and scholars in broader areas including NRM or religious studies.

20. Pagan studies' explicit visibility in these hubs also makes them more likely attract interested practitioners.

21. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

The above spaces represent the most mainstream spaces for Pagan studies research. The work therein benefits from the associated prestige of, say, an academic press, but is also subject to certain conventions. This reflects strategic choices made by scholars in an emergent field. In Black studies, for example, programs that radically rejected traditional conventions were less successful, while funding organizations supported programs in prestigious institutions that assumed traditional norms (Rojas 2007, 144-5). In contrast to these more formal spaces, alternative beliefs can be supported by sheltering communities, which confirm, support, and legitimize alternative worldviews (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 127). The closest approximation to sheltering communities in Pagan studies are a series of what I term para-academic conferences and a Pagan seminary. These spaces straddle academic and Pagan worlds, often blurring lines between scholarship and religion itself. Removed from the constraints of typical scholarly conventions, Pagans in these spaces are more free to define the terms of discourse and legitimize specific claims about Paganism.

Within social movements, “institutional entrepreneurs” are figures who further their movement’s cause and help to recruit and retain members (Creed, Scully, and Austin 2002, 475). In scholarship, institutional entrepreneurs must convince gatekeepers that a field is legitimate, and convince scholars that a given field is the best place to situate one’s research. These tasks require different skillsets. For example, Henry Louis Gates Jr. possessed both research skills (necessary for Black studies to be considered legitimate) and bureaucratic skills (necessary for improving the sustainability of Harvard’s African American Studies program) (Rojas 2007, 123-5). Pagan studies’ institutional entrepreneurs include Chas Clifton, Wendy Griffin, Graham Harvey, and Michael York. As graduate students, York and Harvey organized conferences that helped spread awareness of this area of research. Clifton’s name came up frequently when

speaking with scholars, with many suggesting I would “have to check with Chas” about a particular detail. Clifton transformed *The Pomegranate* into a peer-reviewed journal, and with Griffin, established a Pagan studies book series. York, Griffin, and Clifton also played key roles establishing the CPSPU.

These institutional entrepreneurs required academic legitimacy to fulfill their roles. Griffin notes that she and York were both selected as the first CPSPU co-chairs because they “were the only Pagan PhDs with secure academic jobs” (2015, 94). All four figures are prolific publishers, and appear in nearly every Pagan studies edited volume. However, institutional entrepreneurs also require bureaucratic skills, to draft applications, secure funding for special projects, and broker deals with publishers.

In building Black studies, Rojas highlights the importance of individuals with “one foot in the university and another in the burgeoning nationalist movement” who helped bridge these worlds (2007, 42). Analogues in Pagan studies include Clifton and Selena Fox. Before re-branding *The Pomegranate* as an academic journal, Clifton had experience editing a Pagan zine. Having a foot in Pagan and academic camps, Clifton and *The Pomegranate*’s original editor united both worlds through this journal. Selena Fox and her husband Dennis Carpenter run Circle Sanctuary, a Wiccan organization based in Wisconsin. Both also played key roles forming the CPSPU and convincing others to join.

Allies inside institutions also play key roles in emergent fields (Rojas 2007, 128). Discussing potential challenges facing Asian American studies, Mitchell J. Chang notes, “without a serious collective effort to assist developing AAS units,” they remain vulnerable and ill-equipped “to deal effectively with administrative maneuvering” (1999, 203). In order to grow and become respected, fields must produce research and navigate organizations. Pagan studies

has an ally in Robert Puckett, presently the AAR's Chief Scholarly Engagement Officer. Several scholars describe the importance of having an executive member who supports Pagan studies and can help navigate the AAR.²² Finally, Janet Joyce (founder of Equinox) played a key role establishing *The Pomegranate* and supporting the Pagan studies book series.²³ Administrative allies may not produce knowledge to the same degree as most scholars, but play key roles in building new fields.

One final factor of building hubs is recognizing the social relationships between figures. Although Pagan studies is now large enough that not all members know each other, many core figures are intimately connected. Ezzy suggests that these “social supports and networks” – often formed through these hubs – contribute to Pagan studies’ strength (2015, 74). Especially in the field’s earliest years, chance meetings at conferences produced friendships (Griffin 2015, 89) and working relationships that led to publications (Ezzy 2015, 78). A regular dinner at every AAR conference is perhaps as important to the field as the formal presentations, by fostering the connections that facilitate further research.

Cultivating Academic Legitimacy

Academic fields attempt to legitimize themselves to multiple audiences, including academic colleagues and Pagans themselves. Sarah E. Igo argues that social science depends on “the consent and cooperation of its research specimens” (2011, 286). Igo adds that compelling

22. Clifton adds that when the AAR and Society of Biblical Literature briefly severed their meetings in the early 2000s, one AAR staff member suggested this was an optimal time to re-apply for ‘Group’ status (Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020). Good fortune also facilitates key developments. Due to the brief split between the AAR and the Society of Biblical Literature from 2008-2010 (Bauman, Cassel, and Puckett 2020), this greatly reduced the number of conference attendees. Although Pagan studies was already represented as a ‘Consultation,’ “this change promised to make the AAR open to proposals for more program units” (Griffin 2015, 93), resulting in Pagan studies becoming a Group/Unit by 2008.

23. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

people to take part in research often involves convincing them that doing so is in their own best interests (293). Scholars therefore must convince Pagans that opening their doors to being studied is worthwhile.

In social movement theory, those who support a movement without benefitting are labelled “conscience constituents” (Klandermans, van Stekelenburg, and Damen 2015). However, the configurations of beneficiaries and conscience constituents in movements are not always obvious. In Pagan studies, the identity of beneficiaries depends on how one understands movement goals. If Pagan studies’ goal is simply to study this religion, then scholars are beneficiaries, and Pagans are conscience constituents. Pagans do not benefit from a new journal being established, but support the movement by letting scholars access their communities or by buying subscriptions. However, complicating these roles, Pagan studies also helps legitimize Pagan communities. When scholars shape the support that incarcerated Pagans can access, this activity directly benefits Pagans.²⁴ Scholars may not benefit from someone being permitted to serve as a volunteer prison chaplain, but the work of scholars helps to support such programs. Approaching the function of research from this angle, scholars become conscience constituents. Finally, even without direct benefits, scholars may implicitly benefit from positioning themselves in a certain way. Taking a sympathetic or activist approach can offer such benefits as greater field access, and a wider, supportive readership.²⁵

Movement action benefits multiple parties in multiple ways. Since many scholars require interaction with Pagans to conduct their research, scholars and informants become “coequal

24. Potential supports include a chaplain who represents a Pagan tradition, or an inmate getting access to candles to conduct their rituals. Chapter 8 explores instances when scholars are consulted by courts or governing bodies to offer guidance in what supports would be reasonable, thereby facilitating this access.

25. In contrast, scholars who write critically about Paganism, or are critical of certain movements within Paganism, can become “pariahs” in the community (Strmiska 2012).

producers of scientific knowledge” (Igo 2011, 303). As a result, scholars often discuss the importance of building positive relationships with Pagans, and making communities “feel that they are attended to” (303). Building positive relationships with informants sometimes involves scholars sending drafts of a manuscript to stakeholders for feedback. When Pagans agree with scholars’ conclusions, this can facilitate access for future research. A scholar’s identity also shapes how one is perceived by Pagans. Heather Greene explains, “Pagans themselves ... want to see Pagan academics doing this work ... it lends a legitimacy within that audience too, saying, ‘well, they’re writing about Pagans, and they’re Pagan, so they get us.’”²⁶ Ivakhiv adds that Pagans were less responsive to being studied by someone “who was largely unknown in their own community” (2015, 199). While not suggesting that scholars must be insiders to be accepted, being ‘known’ reveals that cultivating relationships with Pagans can offer greater access. Belonging to a community, being well-known or well regarded, or being seen as sympathetic towards Paganism helps scholars gain trust and respect from Pagans.

Although scholars generally have positive relationships with Pagans, this is not always the case. Hutton has received praise from Pagan readers, but also faced hostility from those who disliked “what they saw as his part in criticizing their traditional origin myths” (Doyle White and Feraro 2019, 10). Luhrmann, who published one of the earliest academic monographs about Pagans, was panned by Pagans who disliked her portrayal of the community. Referencing another sub-field, Cowan recounts telling a Scientology representative that some scholars avoid researching Scientology “‘because you threaten to sue us if we say things you don’t like!’” (2009, 53). Others describe the bothersome process of revising research in consultation with Scientology representatives (Ashcraft 2018, 215-6). Since distrust of scholars potentially reduces

26. Heather Greene, interview with Chris Miller, November 15, 2019.

access for future research (Pearson 2001), critiques from Pagans affects Pagan studies by consciously or unconsciously shaping how scholars describe their work. Seeking to avoid criticism or maintain strong relationships, scholars may strive to have Pagans accept their work as valid.

Unfortunately, a commitment to building strong relationships with informants “frequently impacts issues of methodology, scholarly voice, interpretation, and audience” (Hale 2013, 153). Cultivating academic legitimacy is a balancing act, which involves maintaining relationships with scholars in other fields, colleagues in Pagan studies, and Pagans themselves. Scholars strive to be seen as sufficiently critical (so that colleagues consider the field legitimate), while erring on the side of not being overly critical (to maintain bonds with Pagan communities). Broader academic disciplines represent “master frames” while smaller sub-fields also possess “movement-specific collective action frames” (Benford and Snow 2000, 618-9). Although academia imposes such master frames as peer-review or research ethics, sub-fields hold different ideas about what data is important, what theories are useful, and what methods should guide research. A sub-field’s success reflects how salient scholars, administrators, students, and fund-granting institutions consider its frames (Rojas 2007, 14). For Pagan studies to maintain academic legitimacy, scholars must demonstrate that Pagans are an important group to study, that this field’s standards resemble other fields, and that research about Pagans can inform other discourses.

Concerning how to achieve and sustain academic legitimacy, Hale explains, “the best way that Pagan studies can increase its profile academically is to do good, relevant scholarship.”²⁷ The issue with this suggestion however, is that scholars dispute what actually

27. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

constitutes good scholarship. Ongoing arguments between ‘critical’ (McCutcheon 2001, 2012) or ‘caretaking’ (Omer 2011, 2012) approaches represent debates over what constitutes legitimate scholarship. Similarly, while religious studies has sought to distinguish itself from theology, these fields remain deeply linked (Masuzawa 2005, 22-3).²⁸ Therefore, while academic legitimacy, or the perception that a field produces good research, is important, this is a moving target. As specific hubs for scholarship about Paganism develop (offering individuals greater control over what research gets accepted or rejected), debates over what sort of work is appropriate continue.

Cultivating Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a recurrent theme throughout this project. I conceptualize legitimacy as communities or outlooks being considered valid, justified, or profound. To *legitimize* something is to reinforce a particular perception. Although groups have their own forms of legitimation, Pagan studies helps legitimize Paganism in various ways. To understand these processes, I separate legitimacy into three overlapping spheres. Internal legitimacy describes how Pagans understand their own symbolic universe and relationship to other groups. Scholars support internal legitimacy by reifying emic assertions, thereby validating self-perceptions. External legitimacy describes how non-Pagans perceive Paganism. Scholars provide external legitimacy, for example, by alerting others to Paganism’s existence and presenting Pagans as fundamentally good (occasionally downplaying or ignoring any Pagans who are bad).

28. Even in spaces such as the AAR, which has tried to consciously distance itself from theology, “normative religious perspectives continue to have a place” (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018, 29). Due to dissatisfaction with scholarship in the AAR, an adjacent organization (the North American Association for the Study of Religion) emerged, which frequently critiques the AAR (Kelley 2013, 333). However, that these two groups critique each other so fervently, yet continue to exist so closely (and meet concurrently), complicates determining what is ‘appropriate’ scholarship.

Academic legitimacy describes whether Pagan studies is considered a valid field. Considering that many other religious studies sub-fields use scholarship to legitimize certain traditions (or religion in general) – and are still considered valid – Pagan studies is typical of the broader field. However, the field’s legitimacy is occasionally questioned. To provide Paganism with internal and external legitimacy, scholars must continually construct this field’s academic legitimacy. Doing so involves demonstrating to scholars that this branch of research is valid, and convincing Pagans that this field (and the scholars therein) can be trusted.

Examining legitimation in Pagan studies also raises broader questions concerning the purpose of scholarship. Does this field exist for Pagans to learn more about themselves, to help society understand these groups, or to learn about society through these groups? This remains a contentious issue in this field, as well as religious studies and academia more broadly. Scholars frequently debate the intended audience for research, who can participate, and what approaches scholars can or should adopt. Pagan studies scholars read similar books, meet each other at conferences, and review each other’s work. Through these socialization processes, scholars internalize common terms, methods, and conclusions. Through this “role-specific” socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 139) – as not just a scholar or an anthropologist, but someone who specializes in Pagan studies – individuals become Pagan studies scholars and consider certain norms appropriate to this role. Pagan studies shapes patterns of what kind of scholars, research approaches, and conclusions are expected, and what kind of knowledge this field produces. However, as debates between critics and caretakers (or religious studies and theology) demonstrate, norms of appropriate conduct are still contested. I explore how these patterns are established and debated in Pagan studies.

Describing Black studies, Rojas suggests, “Mobilization is only the beginning of the story” (8). Mobilization describes how fields establish hubs, or more generally, how they first articulate their validity. Once established, “The analyst must pay attention to the processes that stabilize or erode a movement’s achievement” (8). This project explores two separate but interrelated issues. The first concerns how new fields develop and establish a presence in academia. The second concerns how fields interact with the communities that they study. This raises such additional issues as how relationships to communities shape perceptions of fields. A field’s survival involves appealing to multiple parties, meaning that Pagan studies must navigate the delicate balancing act of building relationships with Pagans and building further hubs for scholarship, all while ensuring that this area of research, as much as possible, resembles traditional scholarship.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

To explore how this relatively small academic sub-field offers insights into much broader issues in scholarship, I adopt a mixed-methods approach, including historical analysis, critical discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews. My first task was tracing a timeline for Pagan studies. What was the first book published? When was the first conference? How has the field grown and transformed over time? Fortunately, Pagan studies values institutional memory and many texts make the field's history expressly visible (Davy 2007; Adler 2016; Aitamurto and Simpson 2016; Doyle White 2016). Interviews with scholars (discussed below) also offered data on when and how hubs were established and which figures were involved. Other sources for understanding the history of this scholarly domain included records from the American Academy of Religion, *The Pomegranate*, and email threads between scholars. Such records revealed key dates, figures, and the motivations behind important developments.

Publications

Having established a basic timeline, I applied critical discourse and textual analysis to publications, exploring such issues as how scholars describe Pagans and what issues are considered important. Rather than list all relevant publications, I introduce examples organically across different chapters. This section highlights my criteria for inclusion and how I analyzed publications. I approach Pagan studies as the academic study of contemporary manifestations of an umbrella of related traditions. Groups under this umbrella include Wiccans, Heathens, Druids, Witches, and eclectic solitary practitioners. Scholars approach these groups from such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, history, and folklore studies, occasionally also overlapping with fields like archaeology, NRM studies, and Western esotericism.¹

Orienting myself with this field, I employed data saturation, or immersing myself in literature to ensure familiarity with broader trends. I began by conducting simple catalogue searches of my institution's library system for keywords including Pagan, contemporary Pagan, Neo-Pagan, Witchcraft, Wicca, Druid, Heathen, and Neo-Shaman. Disregarding publications that belong to classical or Biblical studies, I catalogued and read relevant publications. Since Pagan studies has very fluid borders, my awareness of relevant scholars and publications was further supported by integrating research cited in references, based on recommendations from others, or scanning CVs of scholars. Relevant publications were also located through specific journals, including *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* (this domain's only dedicated journal) and *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* (which

1. I integrated these areas of overlap when publications explore people, groups, or ideas that could be classified as contemporary Pagan, but excluded publications when they merely explore ideas or themes that Pagans use for inspiration (e.g., an analysis of sacred trees in the ancient world that does not address how modern Pagans interact with this folklore).

explores NRMs more broadly). Keeping a list of Pagan studies publications, including their author, publisher, and date helped to paint a picture of how the field developed, which figures were involved (or were most important), and what topics this field explores.

My project applies discourse analysis to specific texts to explore how scholars legitimize Pagans. Discourse describes “the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 1). Discourse recognizes that how people speak is structured by and shapes larger patterns of social life (4). Discourse *analysis* involves analyzing these patterns, which meant placing how scholars write about Paganism in conversation with how Pagans perceive themselves, how non-Pagans perceive Pagans, and how scholars write about other religions or topics. Discourse analysis recognizes language as “an integral element of the material social process” (Fairclough 2001, 122). The language used to describe Pagans in scholarship is one aspect of how Paganism’s image is constructed, therefore meriting analysis. My research also employs the related method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which “focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power” (van Dijk 2001, 96). CDA represents “discourse analysis ‘with an attitude’” (96), and can account for how scholars assume authoritative roles (either in scholarship or in Pagan communities) and direct scholarship towards fulfilling specific purposes.

Discourse analysis obviously requires texts to examine. Texts reveal how their authors “treat events and social relations and thereby construct particular versions of reality, social identities and social relations” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2001, 83). I apply discourse analysis to such texts as scholarly publications, interviews, conversations, and online media. Publications or conference presentations represent “‘naturally occurring’ material” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2001,

120), or academic discourse about Pagans that exists without my intervention into the field. This section outlines how I analyzed this naturally occurring material.

Seemingly minor details in a text have “consequences for the discursive construction of both social relations and knowledge and meaning systems” (84). For example, the difference between ‘will’ and ‘may’ in a sentence “presents a particular knowledge-claim as true and incontrovertible” versus “express[ing] a lower degree of certainty” (84). Since the phrase “Pagans are inclusive” versus “some Pagans are inclusive” shapes how the community is represented, my work scrutinizes rhetorical constructions. In addition to certain statements connoting certainty, scholarship itself (as opposed to blogs or popular writing) connotes authority. My analysis involves asking how descriptions “are made to appear solid, neutral, independent of the speaker,” and more generally “treated as factual” (Potter 1996, 1). Scholarship – often perceived as objective or scientific – is used to assert specific claims. Relatedly, I explore how different “factual descriptions” are “put together in ways that allow them to perform particular actions” (1). Pagan studies research often builds on itself through references. Claims made by different scholars are cited, repeated, and eventually established as facts.

Teun A. van Dijk also stresses the importance of analyzing local context (2001, 108). I explore which scholars are speaking, where scholars are presenting or publishing, and how scholars situate their work relative to other fields and ideas. This represents what Norman Fairclough calls “‘interdiscursive analysis,’ or ‘seeing texts in terms of the different discourses, genres and styles they draw upon and articulate together’” (2003, 3). Identifying the particular spaces where Pagan studies exists — the journals, conferences, and courses where scholars

present knowledge about Paganism — and analyzing how these hubs compare to other scholarly outlets, contextualizes how Pagans are described in research.

Describing further questions to pose to texts, James Paul Gee outlines how texts denote meaning and significance, how they build identities and relationships, and how they connect to larger issues (2005, 110-3). This often emerges in key words or patterns (Fairclough 1992, 234-7). Especially because Pagan studies texts occasionally overlap with religious discourse about Paganism, further relevant questions include: who is speaking, to what audience, with what interests, of what is that speaker trying to persuade the audience, and who wins or loses if a “project of persuasion” happens to succeed? (Lincoln 2012, 1).

Building from these questions, discourse analysis involves identifying themes within and across texts, coding relevant text fragments according to categories (Jorgensen and Phillips 2001, 124). Although I approached Pagan studies texts with my own research questions in mind, Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips stress being open to new themes emerging (2001, 124). Deeply immersing myself in Pagan studies promoted awareness of patterns. Certain topics were recurrent, including the insider/outsider debate or the marginality of Pagan communities. Data saturation ensured awareness of the most relevant and persistent topics, identifying the field’s major themes and interests. After identifying these issues, I applied discourse analysis to specific publications to interrogate different perspectives. Identifying major themes in Pagan studies allowed me to place publications and scholars in conversation with each other to trace overarching debates, and compare this field to scholarship more broadly.

Even before reading a book, data like that book’s chosen title reveals how a scholar is positioning the community. Are these groups Neo-Pagans, contemporary Pagans, or just *Pagan*? Are Pagans being compared to New Agers, NRMs, or analyzed on their own? Do certain sub-

groups receive more attention than others? Finally, what issues are deemed important to Pagans? Paying attention to intertextuality, or “how an individual text draws on elements and discourses of other texts” (Jorgensen and Phillips 2001, 7) reveals how word choice can support certain ideological perspectives or hegemonic relations (Fairclough 1992, 237-8). Certain labels position Paganism in affirming ways. Certain approaches that scholars apply (e.g., caretaking versus critical) reflect broader trends in scholarship. My analysis involves placing Pagan studies texts within the larger social practice of religious studies more broadly. Intertextuality finally involves analyzing implicit or indirect meanings in texts, including, “implications, presuppositions, allusions, and vagueness” (van Dijk 2001, 104). I apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to texts, asking for example, what kind of legitimizing work is performed by calling Paganism the fastest growing religion, or suggesting that tolerance is an essential Pagan characteristic.

Despite extensive immersion in the field, qualitative analysis is always shaped by selection bias. This results from selecting texts that most specifically address those themes that I scrutinize most closely.² Reflecting Fairclough’s recommendation to focus on “crucies” or “moments of crisis” (1992, 230), most themes which I analyze represent important debates in the field. These are moments in discourse when something has gone wrong or when misunderstandings require participants to “‘repair’ a communication problem” (230). A crisis or debate in the field produces considerable material for analysis. Not only does this offer a plethora of texts to analyze, but “such moments of crisis make visible aspects of practices which might normally be naturalized, and therefore difficult to notice” (230). Granted, while such debates

2. For example, in chapter 7, which discusses the claim that Paganism represented the fastest growing religion, I closely analyze texts that employ this claim, and disregard those which did not. Therefore, while all scholars in the field did not assert this particular claim, it may inadvertently appear this way due to those texts that I analyze.

may deviate from the normal course of events in Pagan studies, they bring certain perspectives to the foreground, and lend themselves to analysis.

Interviews

My research also involved semi-structured interviews with thirty-two scholars, conducted between February 2019 and February 2020.³ Most interviews were conducted remotely, over Zoom, Skype, or phone, while five were conducted in-person, and one took place over email. Interviews were roughly ninety minutes, with the shortest lasting 45 minutes and the longest three-and-a-half hours. I conducted follow-up interviews in cases where a new research topic emerged, or reading a transcript reminded me of a question. I typed transcripts of all interviews, analyzing (similarly to my analysis of publications) how an informant's answers, given examples, or position fit within the broader field.

Interviews partly helped to understand the field's history, asking when and how scholars became involved in Pagan studies or about their contributions (outside of research) to this area. These biographical questions helped confirm and/or contextualize written histories of the field, and uncovered personal motivations. Interviews also offered further data when analyzing various themes, asking scholars how they describe Paganism in their work or how their identity shapes research.

I recruited participants broadly to provide a diverse sample of the field, speaking with graduate students, tenured professors, sessional lecturers, and retired scholars. Those who study this particularly niche topic may struggle to find research positions in their specialty. Others still

3. Interviews were semi-structured in that questions remained constant for all participants, but conversational flow dictated which questions received brief responses or which prompted follow-up questions. Some participants were also asked additional questions if they were involved with specific institutional hubs.

have no desire to become professional academics, but choose to conduct research independently. Through published research, conference presentations, or administrative service, all of my informants contribute to Pagan studies in some way. However, I adopted a broad definition of Pagan studies scholar to offer a realistic image of the diverse figures who populate this field. Mirroring the range of identities in the field, while most interviewees were Pagans, a handful were not, and several discussed their identity somewhat ambiguously.

To understand the formation of Pagan studies' many institutional hubs, their present operations, and how scholars see these hubs contributing to the broader field, I spoke with figures representing *The Pomegranate*, the AAR's Pagan studies unit, Cherry Hill Seminary, Pagan websites like *The Wild Hunt*, and Pagan-organized conferences. These figures are gatekeepers, determining what knowledge gets presented, thereby shaping discourses surrounding Paganism. I asked figures affiliated with *The Pomegranate* how they became involved, what they look for when evaluating submissions, and their outlook on the journal's future. Concerning another set of important gatekeepers, the chairs and steering committee of the AAR's Pagan studies unit, I spoke with current and past members, asking similar questions posed to members of *The Pomegranate*'s editorial board.

Regarding other hubs for research, later chapters discuss what I term "para-academic conferences," or events that position themselves as scholarly while incorporating Pagan participants. I spoke with founders and current organizers about how their event started, how they evaluate proposals, how their event has changed over time, and what relationship they see between their event and Pagan studies. Concerning a similar academic-adjacent space, Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS), I spoke with Directors, students, and faculty about this organization's

founding, its goals, and how members envision CHS in relation to academia and the Pagan community.

Conferences

A further means of data collection entailed attending conferences. Although the scholars with whom I spoke and the texts which I analyze represent Pagan studies as it exists in Europe, Australia, and North America, my exploration of conferences was confined to the US and Canada. Initially, I sought to discover how Pagan studies existed in the largest religious studies associations in North America. However, after attending annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, I discovered that Paganism was only discussed with any consistency in the AAR. While I continued attending other conferences to discover when, if, and how Pagan studies appeared, I devote considerably more attention to the AAR.⁴ During my research, I also discovered several conferences tailored specifically to Pagan studies. Outwardly promoted as being academic (and attracting some professional scholars), these events also encourage participation from those without any academic credentials. I attended conferences (and specifically, any session or panel discussing Paganism) beginning in 2016 and throughout the duration of my research.⁵ I analyzed papers presented at these conferences in much the same way as publications, asking how research is used to legitimize particular ideas within and/or about Paganism.

4. This space remains the only major academic association with a dedicated Pagan studies section.

5. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many in-person events were cancelled beginning in early 2020, though some were replaced by virtual conferences or seminars.

In addition to analyzing presentations, I also employed what Matthew Engelke calls “that most scientific of anthropological endeavors” namely, “*hanging out*” (2013, xxv). Engelke uses this term to account for the time that scholars spend sitting, talking, eating, and drinking with informants. Business meetings of the AAR Pagan studies unit, conversations in the hallway after a panel, or discussing research over dinner offer important insights on how scholarship is perceived, how one situates their own work, and how Pagans engage with scholarship. Hanging out helps build trust and relationships with others, and revealed things about this circle of scholars that cannot be gleaned from publications.

Pagan Reactions

Although I primarily analyze scholarship (e.g., publications, presentations, and teaching), each chapter also addresses how Pagans engage with research about their community. I wanted to avoid approaching Pagans and asking, “what do you think about this field of research?” since this would unintentionally or artificially create Pagan interest in Pagan studies. Instead, I gauge Pagan reactions to scholarship in various indirect ways.

Recalling that many scholars in this domain are Pagans, discovering how Pagans interact with scholarship often emerged in publications, such as scholars reflecting on how their religious background shapes their research. Although not representing how all Pagans interact with research, such instances do indeed reveal Pagan perspectives. I also rely on what scholars shared through conversations. Interviews probed, for example, how Pagans reacted to learning that a scholar was interested in studying their group. Although I was only hearing about these Pagan reactions secondhand, responses generated insights on how Pagans perceive research, and what benefits they hope to receive through their involvement. Scholars also shared such broad

statements as Pagans being a “well-read community.” While these sweeping statements may not accurately reflect the actual behaviour of all Pagans, it is a glimpse into how some Pagans perceive research.⁶

Finally, I traced Pagan engagement with research through reactions on digital spaces, including blogs and Pagan news sites. The internet gives scholars the opportunity to reach “hidden populations” (Springer, Martini, and Richardson 2016, 28) who are often under-represented in news and media. Many Pagans have personal blogs, through independent websites or hosted on larger platforms such as *Patheos*. *The Wild Hunt* is an even larger site, offering news relevant to Pagans. Posts cover such topics as new archaeological discoveries, upcoming festivals, and reactions to political developments. Occasionally, posts engage with Pagan studies, through reactions to a specific book or conference. Such posts offer insights into what research Pagans are aware of, which scholars Pagans like (or dislike), and what Pagans consider to be the purpose of scholarship.

Due to my project’s broader scope, there was insufficient space for a virtual ethnography of the “Pagan web” (Cowan 2005). However, principles from digital ethnography guided my research in these spaces. Christine Hine used Internet discourse surrounding a criminal trial to explore that event’s deeper meanings (2000). Following an event that happened offline to how it is depicted and discussed online provides insights into how meanings and identities are constructed. Having identified sites where Pagan discourse occurs, my research was further informed by Jannis Androutsopoulos’ discourse-centred online ethnography. The first pillar of this methodology – systematic observation – suggests, “continuous monitoring of given sites of discourse affords insights into discourse practices and patterns of language use” (2008, 5). To

6. Further, the mere assumption that Pagans are well-read offers important data, especially for how some scholars position Paganism as intellectually informed.

identify common actors, themes, and patterns, I conducted intermittent check-ins on several sites, eventually developing a sense of typical conversations.

Finally, since these online spaces complement (but are not the primary focus of) my research, I adopted Stephen Pihlaja's approach of observing "drama episodes" (2013). Drama episodes are specific instances of debate, such as an argument over a particular book. Of course, this approach has the drawback of the subjective selection of data, "potentially limiting the generalizability of any findings" (Pihlaja 2016, 51). However, this method offers "adaptability" as a key asset (51). Instead of being tied to a particular website or set of users, I could observe particular interactions that addressed topics relevant to my project. Although sacrificing generalizability, a discourse-centred approach to drama episodes "allows researchers to look at individual instances of interactions . . . and place them in larger contexts of community interaction" (58). By identifying drama episodes in which Pagans express an interest in scholarship, discursive analysis offers insights into how Pagans view and engage with scholarship.

Capturing the Messiness

A mixed-methods approach helps capture the information necessary to answer this project's over-arching lines of inquiry. Although some of my questions are largely chronological (e.g., when did a particular conference begin), comparing the histories of this field as they are revealed through publications, blogs, and conversations with scholars helps paint a richer picture. Do different sources offer different dates, or credit different figures with playing significant roles? Further, how do various people describe the desired function or importance of a given

development? Drawing on several resources to answer these questions can contextualize the interests and experiences of the many parties who play a role in shaping this field.

A mixed-methods approach also helps answer my second cluster of questions, namely, how communities interact with their scholarly study. As noted, how Pagans react to research is revealed in numerous ways: in books where scholars reflect on conversations with interlocutors, in blogs where Pagans describe an event they attended, or simply asking scholars how their identity informs their work. Concerning how scholarship can legitimize certain ideas or identities, different methods help capture instances when legitimation occurs, and perspectives on if and when legitimation is appropriate. My analysis is informed by conversations, some of which occur across publications, and others which occur between myself and other scholars. My approach helps to understand the patterns that shape Pagan studies research, and better appreciate which trends are supported or debated.

Finally, to re-work Hughes' quote from the outset of this project, the story of Pagan studies is not only something of interest to those who study Pagans; it can also inform anyone interested in the formation of disciplines. Fine's miniaturist approach advises selecting small groups as the site of analysis. However, this approach requires not only exploring a particular space (in this case, Pagan studies), but also how that one space interacts or compares with larger themes, such as the development of Pagan communities, the development of other sub-fields, or debates within the academic study of religion.

Chapter 4 –Getting Your Foot (Directly) in the Door

Reflecting the trajectory of institutionalization that emergent fields generally follow (if they wish to grow), this chapter explores three “direct” ways by which Pagan studies has entered the academy: a sub-unit in the American Academy of Religion (AAR), a peer-reviewed journal, and a Pagan seminary. Since they are highly visible, formal academic structures are significant for “knowledge legitimation” (Gumport and Snyderman 2002, 377). Compared to a stand-alone article about Paganism in *Sociology of Religion*, these hubs are explicit spaces for Pagan studies research. Further, since journals and conferences are markers found in other fields, these hubs are comparable “across a diverse range of higher education settings” (377). Establishing each hub required approval from larger structures, thereby representing subject dignification of this field (Metzger 1987). Finally, hubs are significant since they partially erase “personal accountability” (Stark 2011, 235). Laura Stark notes that through reports from research ethics boards, “individual opinions can be presented as the view of ‘the IRB [Institutional Review Board]’” (235). Similarly, Pagans and scholars frequently describe these hubs as places where Pagan studies happens, and reference the work presented in these spaces as what Pagan studies

does. Rather than having to reference several specific research papers about, for example, transformative experiences that happen during rituals, scholars can describe “Pagan studies research on rituals,” thereby signaling that a broader body of literature exists. Each hub strengthens the ability to point to Pagan studies as a discrete field.

Although scholars often study departments as sites of knowledge production and organization (Gumport and Snyderman 2002), I eschew departments for two reasons. First and most obviously, no “Department of Pagan Studies” exists. Unlike the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University, for example, which organizes scholars who analyze a single tradition, Pagan studies scholars are scattered across institutions and departments. I also focus on journals, conferences, and (in the following chapter) courses due to the changing nature of academia. Analyzing departments, Patricia J. Gumport and Stuart K. Snyderman note that a large proportion of faculty “are fixed in tenured positions” (2002, 385). However, this is increasingly untrue, especially in the humanities and social sciences (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). With many scholars being non-tenured, not paid for their research, or teaching simultaneously at multiple schools, departments become less salient sites for knowledge production. Instead, journals, conferences, and working groups become spaces where scholars specializing in a topic gather and produce knowledge.

Pagan Studies in the AAR

Neil Gross and Crystal Fleming call conferences “key sites for the social orchestration of academic knowledge,” facilitating such functions as “intellectual communication, professional socialization, the reproduction of academic status hierarchies, and the legitimation of new subfields” (2011, 152-3). Conferences first offer spaces for disseminating knowledge. Although

research exists in other spaces, some consider conferences especially impactful because the research presented is more up to date than publication schedules permit, and face-to-face gatherings (or more recently, screen-to-screen conversations) facilitate direct communication between colleagues (Van Dijk and Maier 2006, 485). Conferences can also legitimize or validate new sub-fields. Indicating recognition that Paganism is a valid academic pursuit, associations must approve papers or sessions covering that topic.¹ Conferences also establish norms within fields. Through the conference program, Carolyn Ergi writes, “participants learn . . . what types of knowledge and means of gaining such knowledge [are] valued by the academic profession” (1992, 92). Conferences reinforce how Pagans are described, what aspects of Paganism are considered important, and what research methods are popular.

Conferences also socialize newcomers into a field (Gross and Fleming 2011, 157). Scott Frickel and Neil Gross suggest that social interactions at conferences are especially significant for “young scholars in the early phases of intellectual socialization” (2005, 219). Since graduate students often lack intellectuals “down the hall” who specialize in Pagan studies, conferences play a role fostering mentorship. Junior scholars discover what knowledge this field values, receive feedback to tailor their research, and meet mentors. Finally, because many scholars use presentations “as vehicles for moving projects forward from the state of conception toward execution and completion” (Gross and Fleming 2011, 152), conferences allow scholars to develop their thinking, thereby supporting publications in a field.

The American Academy of Religion is the largest North American academic association dedicated to religious studies (American Academy of Religion, n.d.b.). The AAR’s annual meeting (held jointly with the Society for Biblical Literature) brings together over 9,000

1. As a further example of this institutional validation, some participants also receive funding from their institutions to travel to a particular site to discuss that topic.

members for presentations. Panels and sessions are divided into 150 Program Units, grouped either thematically (e.g., Gay Men and Religion; Sociology of Religion) or by tradition (e.g., Mormon Studies; Buddhism in the West).² Program units (hereafter simply, units) offer sub-fields permanence and legitimacy, sponsoring between one and five sessions of anywhere from three to ten papers. Units guarantee that a topic is represented. Determining themes and adjudicating proposals also influences a field's output, and the perception of what that field does.

AAR units also represent a recruitment centre for Pagan studies. Former unit co-chair Hale notes, "There is no profile for pagan studies at all ... This is like the only place you find it."³ Recruitment to a movement requires sites where people can connect, and where movement intellectuals can convince others that *this space* (as opposed to myriad other fields or units) is "intellectually and professionally the right way" (Frickel and Gross 2005, 219). The AAR's annual meeting represents a site which many scholars of religion already attend, allowing potentially curious parties to simply drop in on a Pagan studies session. The AAR's recognized prestige helps Pagan studies expand its ranks, convincing more scholars to commit their energy to this emergent field. The Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit (hereafter the CPSPU or 'unit') was established in 2005 after informal meetings among scholars in the 1990s.⁴ Analyzing this unit's applications, self-reviews, and past sessions, this section explores the unit's history and how the unit encapsulates broader themes in Pagan studies.

2. As the examples here highlight, units also range from incredibly broad to highly specific.

3. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019. I should note that Hale was the co-chair at the time of our conversation.

4. The CPSPU technically began as a Consultation, which the AAR now calls Exploratory Sessions or Seminars. For a brief period, Consultations that became permanent were called Groups, though they are now called Units. Despite minor differences, these labels are roughly analogous.

The (Rejected) Nature Religions Consultation

The CPSPU has its origins with the Nature Religion Scholars Network (NRSN) and its listserv, which connected scholars interested in studying “any aspect” of nature religions (Clifton 1997, 5-6).⁵ Selena Fox, Dennis D. Carpenter, and others generated this network and listserv during informal conversations at the AAR’s 1994 meeting.⁶ Informal conversations (off- and online) eventually became formalized, and from 1995 to 2004, scholars organized “Additional Meetings” at the AAR.⁷ In 1997, scholars applied to establish the Nature Religions Consultation, offering a more permanent and prominent status in the AAR, but were ultimately unsuccessful. Scholars selected Nature Religions as a moniker due to the overlap it enabled, welcoming scholars studying Pagans and also scholars studying nature-based spirituality in non-Pagan contexts. Eschewing a historically marginalized term was another benefit. Since Christian scholars dominate the AAR, and meetings are held jointly with the Society of Biblical Literature, Selena Fox suggests that nature religions (rather than Pagan) seemed a smarter choice for beginning the process of becoming part of the AAR.⁸

Scholars affiliated with this network sought to convince the AAR that a separate group was necessary due to lack of adequate discussion in other units, noting, “the New Religious Movements Group by definition excludes indigenous or animist traditions” and “the Religion and Ecology Group has been more concerned with major religions’ response to the environmental crisis” (Clifton 1997, 5). This new consultation would devote more attention to

5. Over its history, scholars affiliated with this network have communicated in a variety of ways – face-to-face, phone calls, postal mail correspondence, faxes, and email (Selena Fox, personal correspondence).

6. Selena Fox, interview with Chris Miller, December 10, 2019.

7. Additional Meetings is a formal term from the AAR. These typically happen before the conference officially begins (usually on Thursday or Friday) and offer space for smaller associations, professional groups, and scholars working on a particular topic that is not yet recognized as a unit. Starting as 90-minute sessions before the AAR, these Pagan studies additional meetings eventually “grew to half-day mini-conferences” (Clifton 2015, 6).

8. Selena Fox, interview with Chris Miller, December 9, 2019.

Paganism and nature-based religions. However, this application was rejected, with the AAR suggesting that scholars could still meet their needs in other units, including NRM studies or women and religions (Clifton 2015, 6).

Following this unsuccessful application, scholars applied again in 2004, this time as the Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation. This revealed a schism between what Clifton calls theistic and non-theistic camps, with Pagan studies scholars adopting a theistic understanding of nature religions while Bron Taylor and others adopted the latter approach.⁹ Language in the 2004 proposal illuminates further differences between the fields. Terms such as Pagan or Wicca never appear in the nature religions proposal (save for the appendix), focusing instead on “those religious traditions that draw upon the natural world as a sacred symbolic center” (Clifton 1997, 5). In the 2004 proposal however, Pagan religions are foregrounded, and the importance of nature wanes. Representing an early debate over naming in Pagan studies, scholars recognized that nature religions was not the optimal title. Since many other religions (and therefore, other units) celebrate and/or explore nature, a discrete tradition was needed for this application to succeed. Nature religion as a unifying title initially helped recruit allies to start a listserv, organize pre-conference meetings, and submit a formal proposal. However, the 2004 application reveals how Pagan studies shifts between labels over time, in this case, to emphasize Paganism’s distinctness.

The (Successful) Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation

Despite an unsuccessful proposal in 1997, the NRSN pre-conferences continued for several years. In 2003, doctoral student Cat McEarchern also organized the first Conference on

9. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

Contemporary Pagan Studies, a full day of presentations held before the AAR meeting (Doyle White 2016c, 191). A similar pre-conference was also held in 2004, and by 2005, Pagan studies was officially represented as a Consultation. Thus began an ultimate progression to Group and then Program Unit status, becoming a permanent fixture at AAR meetings.¹⁰

The successful application to become a consultation re-asserted that scholars' interests were not met by existing units, adding that while NRM, women and religion, and ritual studies groups are tangentially relevant, none "can provide for the full range of critical examination necessary" (Griffin et al. 2004, 2). To demonstrate the demand for Pagan-centric discussions, the proposal cites 23 papers and two full sessions on Paganism at recent AAR meetings, the NRSN's pre-meetings from 1998 to 2002, and the pre-conferences in 2003 and 2004 (2). To further prove this emergent field's strength, and demonstrate that academic outlets publish research about Paganism, the application lists a Pagan studies book series, several books from other scholarly presses, *The Pomegranate*, and *Nova Religio* (3-4). That the AAR demands such evidence to establish units demonstrates how scholarly hubs are mutually reinforcing. Each bit of academic research, and larger outlets in particular, is stacked on top of others to prove a field's validity.

Including *Nova Religio* in this list importantly foreshadows Pagan studies' tenuous relationship with the NRM label. As mentioned, the application suggested that the AAR's NRM unit was insufficient for "the full range of critical examination necessary" to study Paganism. The application adds that many Pagan studies scholars are uncomfortable "subsuming their work within the sociological/phenomenological perspectives" of the NRM group (3). However, such issues disappear when *Nova Religio* can bolster Pagan studies' academic legitimacy. Relatedly, units that were previously cited as not "conducive" to Pagan studies (including religion and

10. For a complete list of all presentations relevant to Pagan studies at the AAR since 1990, see [Appendix A](#).

ecology, ritual studies, and NRM groups) hosted joint sessions in the consultation's first years. This arrangement reveals a fundamental paradox, in which sub-fields must assert their uniqueness to become established, while requiring broader connections to assert relevance.

Leadership and Health of the Field

Gross and Fleming argue that conferences reproduce “academic status hierarchies” (2011, 153). AAR units have two co-chairs and a steering committee who coordinate activities. As figures crafting each year's call for papers, accepting (or rejecting) proposals, and inviting scholars to participate on roundtables, leadership can significantly shape fields. Over the years, the CPSPU's leadership comprises scholars who have produced significant research in the field.¹¹ Indeed, asking scholars to list Pagan studies' most influential figures would produce a list with many of the same names. However, leadership of different units also explicitly signals to others that these specific scholars are elite members in a field. The AAR further solidifies academic status hierarchies as each unit curates a list of recommended reading, again signaling that certain books are the most important or influential in a field.¹² Units help solidify hierarchies by elevating specific scholars (and approaches) to Paganism.

Turnover among unit leadership varies greatly across the AAR, and there is little transparency in this process. Co-chairs are usually appointed by the present executive. Griffin shares that when she left her position as chair in 2010, she suggested to the steering committee that Clifton and Salomonsen would make fitting replacements (2015, 95). This succession came to pass, though whether through an election or informal consensus is unclear. Regarding steering

11. For a timeline of Unit Leadership, see [Appendix B](#).

12. The CPSPU lists Berger (1999), Clifton (2006), Harvey (2011), Pike (2004b), and York (2003) (American Academy of Religion, n.d.d.). Notably, most of these figures have served leadership roles in the unit.

committees, some units hold open elections while others accept nominations during business meetings (from which current leadership makes their selection). Some scholars add that they were encouraged or “volun-told” by leadership to forward their name for upcoming vacancies. As the recent replacement of two steering committee members in 2021 was not announced by a call for nominations at the business meeting, nor over the unit’s mailing list, this suggests that current leadership have total control over who is even considered for these positions.¹³

Magliocco expresses some consternation over the unit’s informality, adding, “it doesn’t play by the rules the way that I would like to see it play by the rules.”¹⁴ This comment partly reflects her involvement with other associations. In sections of other association, she notes, “people have terms, the terms last a certain number of years. After those terms are up, that person rotates off. There’s an election. You elect a bunch of new people ... it’s much more clear-cut.”¹⁵ In addition to lacking clear processes, past leaders not relinquishing influence also creates issues: “Some senior members ... continue to think that they have ... a right to control things.”¹⁶ Especially in emergent sub-fields, scholars may feel indebted to founding figures (or vice versa) due to their efforts building the field. Scholars can also wield control or influence by proffering suggestions. Hale mentions unit founders lobbying for panels reflecting “older countercultural concerns” and second wave feminism, adding, “another scholar was trying to lobby people to suggest a panel that reasserted gender binaries because it’s clear that [they were] having trouble with trans inclusion.”¹⁷ Advocating for specific panel topics can reinforce particular portrayals of

13. The nomination of three more new scholars to the steering committee in 2022 was also not announced over the unit’s mailing list, nor at any of the virtual sessions at the 2022 annual meeting. Although it is possible that an announcement was made at the one in-person CPSPU session in 2022 (due to COVID restrictions, I was unable to attend the in-person elements of that year’s dual-format meeting), it remains that there was little to no effort to publicize a call for nominations.

14. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

15. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

16. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

17. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

Paganism. Although the above suggestions were ultimately not approved, they reveal that scholars try to legitimize certain positions through the unit, and that senior scholars can potentially influence the direction of research.

Describing how knowledge is developed and cemented in sub-fields, Frickel and Gross write, “those intellectuals at the pinnacle of disciplinary status structures have the power to define what counts as path-breaking scholarship” (2005, 212). Since leadership adjudicate what research is presented, the assumption is that they are tuned into a field’s broader discourses. However, the CPSPU is somewhat anomalous in this respect. While leadership often includes tenured scholars and adjunct faculty, graduate students and junior scholars are generally underrepresented. The unit also struggles to attract active scholars, partly due to how scholars must strategically approach their careers. Hale comments, “I’ve had one person say ... ‘I’m looking for a full-time job, and I just can’t be that involved in Pagan studies at the national level, ‘cause I don’t think that it gives me the right academic profile.’”¹⁸ Since some scholars do not (or cannot) commit their full energy to this unit, leadership are not always figures with active research profiles in Pagan studies. This potentially makes the unit less suited to evaluating what Frickel and Gross call pathbreaking scholarship.

As in all fields, influential positions are shaped by both academic work and interpersonal relationships. Especially in the CPSPU, where several figures are less active as Pagan studies researchers, personal relationships shape who fills various positions. The CPSPU’s unique composition — with a large audience of interested observers, but less active specialists — means this unit differs from how fields typically develop knowledge. Even when leadership roles are

18. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

filled by scholars with active research agendas in this area, social ties still shape the persons recruited to fill vacant positions.

All units must regularly submit self-reviews to the AAR, which pose questions concerning the amount of scholarship produced within, or the larger relevance of, a given field. That the AAR requests attendance numbers and acceptance rates for submissions, for instance, reveals metrics by which fields are evaluated. While the AAR has no specific targets that units must reach, “regular low attendance at panels will suggest that the relevance and outreach is poor.”¹⁹ The AAR also “wants to see a good ratio of submissions to rejections,” since this reveals whether a unit attracts enough research, and because few submissions might lead a unit to accept papers of lower quality.²⁰ Analyzing past self-reviews from this unit reveals how fields establish (and perhaps in some cases, manufacture) legitimacy.

In 2007, the lowest attended session was listed at 44, with an average around 60 (Griffin and York 2007, 3). This is much higher than the average attendance of 40 that I observed from 2018 to 2020. The 2012 self-review reports a low of 34 (much closer to my recent observations), but shockingly reports a high of 208 (Contemporary Pagan Studies Group 2012, 255). Since past leadership could not recall a session being this well attended (and 208 attendees is remarkably high for any AAR session), this likely represents miscalculation or misrepresentation.²¹

Between the years of 2009 and 2011, the unit also reported increasingly higher numbers of proposals submitted, indicating both growing interest in this topic, and the unit’s ability to be more selective in the papers that are presented. In 2009, the reported acceptance rate was 70%. This fell to 53% in 2010, and an astounding 21% in 2011. This last number raises some serious

19. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

20. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

21. By 2017, reported average attendance was back to between 30-56 (2), reinforcing that the 2012 numbers were abnormally high.

doubts. There were thirteen Pagan studies presentations in 2011, which means that the group supposedly received over 60 submissions. It can be difficult to identify sixty Pagan studies scholars, let alone sixty people with research to present at this conference in a single year. Much like the anomalous 2012 attendance, this is also likely a miscalculation or over-inflation to support the unit's legitimacy.²²

Appearing in the unit's first self-review since becoming a full group, these inflated statistics reveal how fields can manufacture legitimacy to ensure survival. In contrast, the 2017 self-review reports a slight regression in numbers, but actually addresses issues facing Pagan studies, such as distinguishing between the theological and empirical voice or clarifying the field's very "boundaries of inquiry" (1). That initial proposals and reviews would gloss over any struggles and inflate the amount of activity reveals how scholars try to prove a field's academic legitimacy. Acknowledging that issues exist in 2017 reveals a feeling of security, and confidence that the unit will get the chance to address any issues.

The CPSPU and Pagan Legitimation

This section briefly explores how presentations help legitimize Paganism. Much of the research presented in this unit is critical, informed by method and theory, and clearly engages with other fields. Further, my experiences attending other units reveals that research which merely functions to legitimize a certain community, topic, or idea is common in other fields. I

22. For additional context, acceptance rates of 70% in 2009 and 53% in 2010 mean there were roughly 17 and 26 proposals in those years. Leadership share that in recent years, the unit receives between 15 to 25 submissions, reinforcing that the reported numbers in 2012 are abnormally high. While this suggests a slight decline over time, the unit still receives enough submissions to organize three full sessions each year and discriminate based on quality.

highlight CPSPU presentations as merely one example of how research can facilitate legitimation.

Several Pagans who are not scholars attend the AAR each year. While such persons profess an interest in scholarship more generally (and indeed, also attend sessions of other units), the AAR is generally the only academic conference they attend each year. Due to the existence of the CPSPU, one can attend the AAR confident that research about Pagans will be presented. Simply listening to presentations (especially those which reinforce one's beliefs) can offer legitimacy. Some attendees also engage with scholarship by offering feedback. In 2018, Russell Burk's presentation explored cultural appropriation among Pagans, especially how Pagans adopt African traditions and perpetuate anti-Black perspectives. One attendee expressed concerns with how Burk described Pagan appropriation, noting that their work as a chaplain in prisons requires working with many traditions simultaneously, and that BIPOC inmates generally accepted their combining these traditions. This objection is representative of how Pagans often challenge less flattering scholarly descriptions. Interpreting Burk's analysis as an attack on their identity, this Pagan used their unique experiences to challenge the idea that Pagans misappropriate from other cultures or religions. Asserting their preferred interpretations during the discussion period allows Pagan attendees to shape the perception of Paganism in this scholarly arena.

Highlighting an issue that herself and other co-chairs aim to address, Hale describes "a lack of papers that are theoretically informed," adding, "yeah, your festival slides are great, [but] we're not here to listen to what you did on your summer vacation."²³ Gwendolyn Reece adds that untheorized thin description was once especially common in proposals, explaining, "there was an awful lot of...like let me report on my coven meeting or whatever," adding, "we've been trying

23. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

really hard to get away from that.”²⁴ Although leadership seeks to address this issue, some papers are still emblematic of this approach. In 2019, one session explored Pagan interactions with the environment. Scholars identified a site, described what people did there, and what materials they used. Such presentations often amount to “mere description” (as opposed to thick description), without any analysis of how such sites or practices address a particular question within Pagan studies or other fields.²⁵

Not only do such presentations potentially hurt the perception of the field, but two particular papers offer legitimacy by linking Paganism to environmentalism (without evidence to support this assertion). Tõnno Jonuks describes offerings left on trees in Estonia as a practice among environmentally-minded Pagans. However, although people indeed left objects hanging from trees at the site in question, Jonuks fails to substantiate that objects were only left behind by Pagans. As one scholar in attendance shared with me, this presentation also failed to address whether Pagans are environmentally conscious or interrogate how the offerings “end up just adding to that layer of plastic that is geologically what defines the Anthropocene.”²⁶ Examining long barrows constructed in Britain, Jennifer Uzzell suggests that contemporary persons who construct long barrows or seek to have their remains buried in sustainable ways offer validation that Druidry possesses an environmentalist outlook. However, Uzzell’s presentation focuses on a structure built by a non-Druid. Further, while sharing that all available burial niches had been

24. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, November 7, 2019. Reece adds that the number and quality of submissions has increased in recent years, allowing the unit to be more discerning over what research gets approved.

25. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, December 23, 2019.

26. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, December 23, 2019.

reserved, it is not clear whether any were purchased by Druids. These presentations depict Paganism in a particular manner, without substantiating Pagan connections to such sites.²⁷

Outlining another issue shaping presentations (in this and other units), Hale notes, “you’ve got people who frankly don’t know when they’re writing from a theological perspective rather than from an objective perspective.”²⁸ Some assert normative statements through their research, which “recommend or condemn certain courses of human conduct” (Camic, Gross, and Lamont 2011, 3). Such scholars try to shape what is considered authentic Paganism or assert what should be considered good religious beliefs. Examining the role of animal sacrifice in Heathen rituals, Davy suggests, “this teaches us how we should be relating to our food,” asserting that more people should embrace this approach to consumption (2020). Exploring the presence of women, LGBTQ persons, and those with disabilities in Witchcraft, Angela Puca legitimizes Paganism in a similar manner (2020). Puca suggests that Paganism is sympathetic to the worldview of the LGBTQ “demographic.” She adds that Paganism’s “holistic view of reality” is easily integrated into outlooks which view gender and sexuality as existing (and shifting) along spectrums. Although it is unclear whether a community as diverse as “LGBTQ” has one coherent worldview (and ignoring the more complex situation on the ground), Puca positions Paganism as a community that accepts and nurtures LGBTQ persons. Reifying various admirable features as essential components of Paganism, Puca legitimizes Pagan practices and beliefs.

Berger’s 2019 presentation discussed the overlapping nature of Pagan communities and the alt-right, especially in visible displays like the Charlottesville riots. However, a 2020 CPSPU

27. Notably, when speaking with other scholars after this session, some offered more critical feedback and others remarked how great the papers had been. These mixed reactions reveal that among attendees, there is no consensus concerning the purpose of the unit, or even the standards that constitute good scholarship.

28. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

session – titled ‘Diverse Perspectives on Heathenry’ – included no papers addressing race. When audience members questioned this oversight, one presenter noted that racist beliefs comprise a “small percentage” of Heathenry. A similar discussion followed Berger’s 2019 presentation. Clifton suggested that while peaceful, diverse Pagans generally receive less attention, racist Pagans should be recognized as an insignificant fraction. Berger countered that small percentages can do inordinate damage, and that the terrorism and white nationalism promoted by some who claim Pagan identities should be a significant area of study, regardless of how it makes the broader Pagan community look.²⁹ Pagan studies remains divided over if and how diversity should be confronted. Notably, Jefferson Calico’s 2020 paper examining White Nationalism in Heathenry was presented in the NRM unit, *not* Pagan studies, while CPSPU presentations downplayed these issues.³⁰ Regardless of how Paganism exists on the ground, sessions can downplay negative elements or accentuate a positive image, thereby shaping perceptions of Paganism.

Granted, CPSPU presentations are hardly alone in this approach to scholarship. José Cabezón, Francis X. Clooney, and Jay Garfield all discuss what they term “the confessional turn in the AAR,” suggesting that this association is more receptive to normative perspectives (2020). Garfield adds, “AAR is one of the few spaces where speaking in a confessional tone does not discredit you from academic discourse.” As the primary academic organization where Pagan studies is represented, the AAR seems amenable to scholars using research to assert normative claims. Pagan studies’ alignment with the AAR offers a scholarly platform to legitimize ideas

29. This conversation occurred in November 2019. When speaking with Clifton more recently, he shares that he has come to realize that people who call themselves Pagan and affiliate with right wing ideologies are a growing presence, and one which scholars should explore (Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020).

30. I should note that at the most recent AAR conference in November 2021, one session dealt much more directly with issues of racist and nationalist ideologies within Paganism. This suggests a shift to more directly confront these issues.

within or about Paganism. Despite my own perspectives concerning what should be appropriate in scholarship, this is hardly a settled issue, especially in the AAR.

Although I have critiqued some presentations, many scholars still aim to impose rigorous academic standards on the research presented in this unit. Describing what she looks for when evaluating proposals, Magliocco explains, “I look for a proposal that’s well-researched and well-theorized. I look for method. Do they talk about their method? Is their method decent? What is their argument? ... Is it linked into existing literature? Do they know the existing literature?”³¹ While such standards may already reflect how scholars evaluate research, imposing these principles partly reflects awareness of how the field might be perceived. Damon Berry shares that he does not want to see Pagan studies “become even more marginalized because people’s perception is it’s just a bunch of Pagans talking about being Pagan to each other.”³² Reece similarly notes, “it is important to us, for the legitimacy of contemporary Pagan studies, being seen by the rest of the AAR as a legitimate kind of field, that we have methodological sophistication.”³³ Reece believes that the CPSPU has improved over time, due to the general maturation of scholars and the standards imposed by leadership.³⁴ These reflections reinforce that for emergent fields, “mobilization is only the beginning of the story” (Rojas 2007, 8). Having this unit is one sign which marks the field of Pagan studies as legitimate. However, for fields to survive (and better yet, grow), they must build on that legitimacy and cultivate good research. Current leadership clearly recognizes this reality, seeking to impose certain standards. Most presentations each year are testament to how the unit has cultivated an insightful and critical academic space. However, that certain presentations – shaped by thin analysis and mere

31. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

32. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

33. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, November 7, 2019.

34. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, November 7, 2019.

description – inevitably slip through demonstrate how the unit still occasionally functions to legitimize perspectives within Paganism.

Conferences and Institutionalization

Conferences represent a low-stakes site of knowledge production. Audiences at most sessions are small, and time restrictions mean that some papers may be not fully “fleshed out” (Gross and Fleming 2011, 169). As a result, audiences generally grant “evaluative leniency” (169). Demystifying the nature of academic conferences, Gross and Fleming offer the reminder, “there is nothing unusual about an elite professor using his research account to finance a trip to a conference in an appealing destination” (2011, 152). Although important academic work is certainly presented at conferences (and within the CPSPU), such events also represent social occasions. Like any conference, this unit is a place for people to engage with research, but also connect with long-time friends and enjoy different local sights.³⁵ The above reasons reinforce why conferences are steps in a field’s institutionalization, but hardly a suitable endpoint.

Further, beyond AAR membership, there are no qualifications to participate in a unit. Several non-academics participate in academic discourse by simply responding to papers (occasionally challenging a scholar’s conclusions) or suggesting topics for future panels. Pagans hoping to see their community portrayed in a specific way can frame critiques as comments in a

35. For instance, while the AAR is now the primary home for Pagan studies research, coincidence and social ties partly shape where fields become institutionalized. Griffin presented her earliest research on Paganism at the Association for the Sociology of Religion and published in *Sociology of Religion* (2015, 88-9). At these conferences, Griffin met York, both of whom eventually became the first chairs of the AAR’s Pagan studies unit. Several scholars interested in Paganism also attended meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in the 1990s. In the early 2000s however, when Griffin was developing a Pagan studies book series at AltaMira, a colleague encouraged her to recruit Clifton as co-editor, who could help diversify the series with his own academic and Pagan contacts (93). Griffin only began attending the AAR to solidify this connection with Clifton, but the AAR would soon become one of the institutional homes for Pagan studies.

scholarly arena, thereby influencing the broader perception of Paganism or Pagan studies. The low-stakes nature of conferences also offers freedom to define norms in a more elastic manner. Especially since leadership members may not situate their research in this field, conferences can be fairly elastic in terms of who oversees adjudication and what gets approved. The flexibility and informality of conferences opens the door for untheorized descriptions, or presentations that explicitly legitimize certain perspectives.

Despite this informality, conferences still represent (and more importantly, are described as examples of) academic legitimacy. Being granted unit status represented recognition by a larger academic body that Pagan studies is a valid field. This unit has also caught the attention of the Pagan community. Heather Greene, a Pagan journalist who has never attended the AAR, still calls this unit an important development in Pagan studies, adding, “that’s one of the places where they’re really showing a sense of legitimacy to the discipline. That is pretty profound within academia.”³⁶ From practitioners who attend sessions each year to those who simply read about the conference online (Pitzl-Waters 2012; Mooney 2015a), the unit is considered an important step in making the religion and field more legitimate.

The Pomegranate

The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies is the only academic journal devoted to this subject. While Pagan studies research also appears elsewhere, the roughly 40 articles related to Paganism that *Nova Religio*, for example, has published since it was

36. Heather Greene, interview with Chris Miller, November 15, 2019.

founded in 1997 represent a small fraction of that journal’s total output.³⁷ *The Pomegranate* therefore offers an exclusive space for articles about “ancient and contemporary Pagan religious practices” (The Pomegranate, n.d.b.), publishing much more Pagan studies research than any other academic outlet.

The history of this journal is more straightforward compared to the AAR. The journal in its initial imprint was primarily reviewed, printed, and distributed by one or two people. Even *The Pomegranate* becoming fully peer-reviewed was a relatively straightforward development, as Clifton met Equinox Publishing’s founder Janet Joyce at the AAR’s 2001 annual meeting.³⁸ Further, the way that specific *Pomegranate* articles legitimize Paganism are explored elsewhere in this dissertation. This section will therefore focus on what *The Pomegranate* means for the field and how it highlights broader themes.³⁹

The ‘Old’ Pomegranate

Founded in 1997 by Fritz Muntean and Diana Tracy, *The Pomegranate* was initially subtitled *A New Journal of Neopagan Thought*. This journal, which Muntean calls “semi-scholarly,” sought to provide “a conduit of information between academic Pagans and the (literate) Pagan public” (2015, 83). Early issues included contributions from Max Dashu (1999), Donald Frew (1999), and M. Macha NightMare (1998) – all active writers in Pagan circles – and also reached an academic audience, including papers from Magliocco (2000, 2002), Pike (2000),

37. Larger journals, including *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Religion Compass*, or *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, have each only published a dozen articles about Paganism over even longer histories.

38. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020. The Pagan studies book series (currently with Equinox) though important to the field, also has a straightforward history of Clifton building a connection with Joyce.

39. For a complete overview of all *Pomegranate* articles, see [Appendix C](#).

and Salomonsen (1999), and book reviews from Harvey, Ezzy, and Clifton. Concerning this journal's desire to appear as a scholarly outlet, Muntean notes that Hutton agreeing to reprint articles that first appeared elsewhere, "lent our fledgling journal a great deal of much-appreciated cachet and prestige" (2015, 83). Offering another way that this journal positioned itself as academic, Muntean adds that the "main articles" were peer-reviewed (83). As an early contributor, Sîân Reid shares that she reviewed articles, and prepared her own submissions with similar rigour to those she sent to traditional journals.⁴⁰ Quoting praise he received from Magliocco, Muntean writes, "I am impressed by the recent issues . . . The articles are for the most part serious and scholarly, and the debates are intelligent" (84). Through scholars submitting their work and imposing standards, this publication separated itself from more popular or devotional outlets. Under Muntean, *The Pomegranate* published quarterly issues from 1998 to 2000, three issues in 2001, and a final issue in 2002.

The Pomegranate's history also connects with Clifton's history in publishing. In 1984, Clifton and Mary Currier-Clifton started *Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion*, as "a forum where people of different concerns – scholarly, spiritual or operative – can exchange ideas and information" (2). Despite being practitioner-centric (including photos, poems, and devotional essays) and only lasting four issues, *Iron Mountain* offered a place for scholars to refine their work and eventually inspired Muntean to create *The Pomegranate* (Clifton 2015, 3).

Reflecting Clifton's desire to "bring together 'the professors and the practitioners'" (1984b, 38), *Iron Mountain's* first issue featured an article by three sociologists (Kirkpatrick, Rainey, and Rubi 1984) and responses from several Pagans. This issue reflects broader trends in interactions between Pagans and scholars. All three reviews were largely negative, with titles

40. Sîân Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

like “A Good Survey Turned to Trash” (Forfreedom 1984). Criticism largely stemmed from Pagans feeling misrepresented. Isaac Bonewits suggests, “it’s odd that half their sample was male. I’d say one quarter to one third is more likely the national average” (1984, 42), while Ann Forfreedom contests that Feminist Witches are a minority (40). Both cite anecdotal observations to promote their preferred portrayal of Paganism.

Both *The Pomegranate* and *Iron Mountain* foreshadow larger trends in Pagan studies. Mirroring the Conference on Current Pagan Studies (discussed next chapter), various British conferences in the 1990s, and Cat McEarchern’s AAR pre-conferences, both journals were created by graduate students. Both journals also sought to unite practitioners and scholars, but within a scholarly setting. This collaboration within a scholarly space also mirrors similar venues in Jewish or NRM studies. Pike notes that such blending facilitates conversations between Pagans and scholars, and helps scholars “test and negotiate” the labels or perspectives that they apply in research.⁴¹ However, scholars are often unable to only publish in these spaces. Clifton notes that Kirkpatrick and colleagues – “no doubt seeking publication in a known, peer-reviewed setting” – submitted their reworked research to an academic journal (2015, 3). While significant figures contributed to both journals, scholars must often seek out more academic spaces. Finally, the responses from practitioners printed in *Iron Mountain* foreshadowed disputes between scholars and Pagans, especially when Pagans dislike the labels that scholars apply.

The ‘New’ Pomegranate

A transformed *Pomegranate* returned in 2004 with Clifton as Editor, Muntean as Editor Emeritus, “an editorial board representing various disciplines,” and an academic imprint under

41. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

Equinox (Clifton 2004a, 6).⁴² Unlike other outlets for Pagan publishing (magazines, blogs, popular presses), *The Pomegranate* carries the authority of an academic outlet. Equinox lends authority as an academic press hosting many other publications. *The Pomegranate*'s editorial board has boasted Magliocco, Pike, Hutton, Ezzy, and Harvey. Such scholars bring name recognition, connote authority, and make this publication appear more legitimate as an outlet for research. Noting the significance of professional scholars occupying such roles, Carole M. Cusack explains that she was asked to join as part of a strategy of "mainstreaming *The Pomegranate*," and addressing critiques that the board "was stacked with a whole lot of Pagans who didn't have the requisite level of ... critical distance toward the material."⁴³ Outlining her considerations when reviewing submissions, Cusack lists mastery of the field, saying something original, being technically competent, and addressing the broader research on a topic.⁴⁴ Pike similarly looks for good writing, a claim "that's backed up with some deep analysis," and work that goes beyond the purely descriptive.⁴⁵ These scholars and the standards they impose help *The Pomegranate* be considered a legitimate space for research.

Having an academic journal is significant for many reasons, beyond the obvious fact that fields are generally represented by journals. *The Pomegranate* offers an outlet to publish research on this topic, and tangibly validates this field's existence. Book reviews also enable the promotion of other publications in Pagan studies. Occasionally, *The Pomegranate* even reviews

42. As Clifton briefly highlights in his reflections on the earliest years of Pagan studies, another major transformation between the 'old' and 'new' *Pomegranates* was the shift to a digital platform. Both *Iron Mountain* and Muntean's version of *The Pomegranate* were physically printed and distributed, resulting in higher costs and more effort on the part of the editors. Although *The Pomegranate* still offers a print version, digitalization (of the articles that scholars submit and the final version that Equinox publishes) has greatly reduced costs and labour. Indeed, reduced costs, labour, and ease of access has led to more publications in academia more broadly. For a discussion of the impacts of digitalization on publishing, see for example Allahar 2017; Paltridge 2020.

43. Carole M. Cusack, interview with Chris Miller, September 20, 2019.

44. Carole M. Cusack, interview with Chris Miller, September 20, 2019.

45. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

non-academic books, especially from publishing houses that specialize in esotericism. Such books are not typically reviewed by scholarly journals, but may interest scholars as primary source material. Alternatively, this can potentially bend definitions of what counts as scholarship in the field, implicitly legitimizing a book as academic simply because it is reviewed in this journal. Finally, reviews help scholars identify trends, allowing news from the Pagan world to enter academic discourse.

Another function of *The Pomegranate* is providing an outlet and echo for research produced in other hubs. *The Pomegranate* formally launched at the 1997 AAR annual meeting, and papers presented that year were published in the journal's third volume (Muntean 2015, 83). After it was revived, the first volume included papers from the 2003 AAR pre-conference. A 2013 issue included papers from an entire AAR panel, and many individual presentations have been published over time. Despite no formal link between the two, *The Pomegranate* represents the de facto publishing arm of the CPSPU.

Finally, *The Pomegranate* helps Pagan studies shape itself as a field. An important task for academic fields is “construct[ing] historical narratives,” identifying the movement's founders, reasons why the movement arose, and through what processes (Frickel and Gross 2005, 223). From the outset, Clifton suggested that this journal exists because Pagan studies scholars “continue to find themselves not completely at home in such categories as ‘new religious movements’” (2004a, 7). The journal also sought to establish “an audacious redefinition of the term ‘pagan’” (7-8). These claims, offered in a letter from the editor, distinguish Paganism from NRMs and legitimize broadened definitions of Pagan, helping this journal facilitate identity construction. A 2015 special issue published reflections from key figures in the field. Such autobiographical articles allow movement intellectuals to outline Pagan studies' history and their

place therein. Editors can further articulate the field's intellectual history through thematic issues. Focusing on topics like politics or fashion, special issues help the field define and promote various thematic concerns, potentially shaping trends in Pagan studies.

Despite offering a legitimate outlet for research, the increased professionalization of *The Pomegranate* presents what some perceive as drawbacks. Muntean laments that with academic journals being prohibitively expensive and often using inaccessible language, the 'new' *Pomegranate* discourages more general readers (2015, 84). To remedy this, Muntean suggests that scholars should engage more with practitioners. As will be discussed, encouraging scholars to speak more directly with practitioners reflects a common recommendation for improving Pagan studies. However, this also reveals divergent beliefs regarding the field's audience or purpose. Suggesting that scholars create an accessible website to summarize articles and explain scholarship to Pagans, for example (84), Muntean implies that Pagan studies is partly in service to Pagan communities.

In contrast, reflecting assumptions that Pagan studies should be primarily oriented towards scholars, some criticize *The Pomegranate* for failing to meet certain standards or straying too far towards advocacy. For example, since Pagan studies attracts many practitioners who are interested in scholarship (but lack the requisite training), some submissions are too descriptive, and fail to offer deeper analysis.⁴⁶ Another scholar shared similar reasons for why they drifted away from Pagan studies: "I was feeling that it was just the same people talking to themselves, and ... new graduate students coming up and publishing things that I was looking at and saying 'well that's been done ten years ago. There's nothing new here.'"⁴⁷ The recent growth of Paganism in Eastern Europe also shapes the quality of submissions. Clifton shares that he

46. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

47. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

receives many papers which merely describe “who started the movement, what are their internal disputes, what are their texts, what folkloric elements are they using,” adding, “it’s interesting, and it’s gotta be written down, but then, ten years on, you’re going to be saying, ‘well, what else you got?’”⁴⁸ A compounding issue concerns the quality of submissions. Since scholars studying Pagans in Eastern Europe are often from those areas, such research is shaped by different linguistic competencies and scholarly standards.⁴⁹ As Pagan studies’ catch-all journal, *The Pomegranate* attracts some professional research, but also considerable amounts of amateur submissions. Being the flagship journal for a field is a strength in terms of visibility, but presents challenges concerning quality. Contrary to the suggestion that this journal needs more outreach to practitioners, some scholars counter that this journal should raise its standards, by tightening its criteria, emphasizing theory and method, and encouraging connections to other fields, which might have the opposite effect.

Where Does The Pomegranate Grow From Here?

Cusack suggests that *The Pomegranate* is currently in a perfect place, calling it “neither too excellent nor too mediocre.”⁵⁰ It is rigorous enough to be considered scholarly, yet remains accessible to students and junior scholars. Reflecting the general growth of Pagan studies over time, Pike adds, “There’s more graduate students, there’s a larger body of scholarship they can draw on ... so I think the quality has definitely gotten better.”⁵¹ This journal offers space for

48. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020. Granted, Clifton shares that this pattern is also found in NRM studies, noting, “there’s always something new coming down the road, and you have to describe it ... so, it was stories. And description. And then, the next year there would be a new bunch.” Especially as Paganism grows in new locales, there are more new movements, leading to more submissions offering mere description.

49. Carole M. Cusack, interview with Chris Miller, September 20, 2019.

50. Carole M. Cusack, interview with Chris Miller, September 20, 2019.

51. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

emerging scholars to position their work, representing another key recruitment centre for this area of study.

Despite a generally positive trajectory, *The Pomegranate* also reveals tensions within Pagan studies. While some want *The Pomegranate* to communicate more clearly with Pagans, others think the journal needs to speak with larger academic audiences. A related challenge concerns retention. Notably, while some scholars encourage students to submit work to *The Pomegranate* and continue to review articles or publish book reviews, this is not where those scholars position their own research. Pike shares, “generally I’ve tried to place my publications in more, what I would say mainstream religious studies contexts, just because I want to reach a broader audience.”⁵² Highlighting practical considerations that affect scholars going up for tenure or promotions, Reece notes that *The Pomegranate* is unlikely to ever have a high impact factor.⁵³ Scholars feeling that they must publish in spaces with a larger readership leads to “some good work that ought to be in *The Pomegranate*” ending up elsewhere.⁵⁴ This creates a vicious cycle. Renowned scholars publish in other spaces, leading to less stellar research getting published in *The Pomegranate*, thereby weakening the journal’s impact and discouraging submissions from top scholars. While many consider *The Pomegranate* a good starting place, it may not be the space where the most influential Pagan studies research appears.

Cherry Hill Seminary

There is currently no department where Pagan studies is a group of scholars’ explicit focus, which is the typical next step in a field’s institutionalization. However, one relevant space

52. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

53. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, November 7, 2019.

54. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

for the purposes of this chapter is Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS), which calls itself “the leading provider of education and practical training in leadership, ministry, and personal growth” for Pagan and nature-based spiritualities (Cherry Hill Seminary, n.d.f.). This section explores CHS’s reputation as an academic institution, the role it plays in Pagan studies, and finally, the role that it occasionally plays in legitimizing Pagan identities.

Besides CHS, similar organizations including Circle Sanctuary (n.d.) or Woolston-Steen Theological Seminary (n.d.) have analogous training programs for Pagans seeking to deepen their knowledge. Most of these organizations are unaccredited, but are “degree granting institutions” recognized by a particular state (Cherry Hill Seminary 2020). Despite many comparable Pagan seminaries, I focus on CHS because the many traditional scholars that this school employs gives it a slightly higher academic standing. Further, CHS is often rhetorically positioned as a part of Pagan studies. Discussing CHS, Greene shares, “they’re really trying to push the envelope and offer a Pagan seminary and college with solid credibility.”⁵⁵ Discussing CHS in his history of NRM studies, Ashcraft suggests that Pagan studies “has its own seminary” (2018, 222). Describing CHS’s relationship with Pagan studies, Executive Director Holli Emore notes that scholars are always eager to help CHS by appearing at events, adding “most of the scholarly world is in support of us.”⁵⁶ Through these and other descriptions, CHS is often positioned, by both Pagans and scholars, as one institutional arm of Pagan studies.

55. Heather Greene, interview with Chris Miller, November 15, 2019.

56. Holli Emore, interview with Chris Miller, April 9, 2019.

Assessing Academic Legitimacy

For the purposes of exploring how CHS fits within Pagan studies, it is relevant that Pagan studies has traditionally aligned itself with religious studies. Relatedly, the purpose of religious studies is generally conceived as not studying religious beliefs alone, but rather exploring how beliefs shape people's identity, behaviour, and communities. Understanding how CHS relates to Pagan studies means asking whether it fosters the study of Pagans or if it is a place for Pagans to study.

CHS's MDiv and "Master of Pagan Studies" degrees most closely approximate the traditional goals of religious studies. Students are trained to "conduct research using primary and secondary source materials" and develop "a critical awareness of how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social categories impact Pagan theology and practice" (Cherry Hill Seminary n.d.b.). Although specifically directed towards Pagan traditions, these goals are not dissimilar to the training offered by religious studies programs. Graduate courses are also taught by scholars who possess postgraduate degrees. Revealing a stable of traditional scholars, faculty include Vivianne Crowley, Joanne Pearson, and Murphy Pizza; CHS's Advisory Council includes Ronald Hutton and Michael York; and CHS's first Academic Dean was Wendy Griffin. Although lacking formal accreditation, the faculty who oversee this institution and teach courses, and the intended learning outcomes of certain degrees, highlight ways that CHS might fit in with the broader field of religious — and by extension Pagan — studies.

Surveying the courses offered complicates how CHS fits within Pagan studies. Indeed, some courses would not be out of place at many universities. York shares, for instance, that his "World Religions from a Pagan Perspective" course almost entirely resembles an introductory

world religions course that he taught at Bath Spa University.⁵⁷ “Witches on Screen” examines a particular theme in popular media, and would fit in at many sociology, media studies, or religious studies departments. “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Pagan Religions” also has analogues in “Death and Dying” courses, common in religious studies departments. While perhaps exploring a more niche topic or tradition than typical religious studies courses, these encourage research about religion. In contrast however, other courses seem geared towards *teaching* religion. Courses such as “An Introduction to Germanic Magic” or “Spiritual Formation: Soul Work” focus less on religion as a social phenomenon, and instead on how to practice Paganism or perform magic.⁵⁸ The former, for example, is less focused on exploring the history of Germanic magic or the psychology behind magic, than introducing spells and how to execute them (Cherry Hill Seminary, n.d.h.). CHS seems to straddle the complex rift between religious studies and theology, with certain courses, faculty, and students engaged in the former, and others with the latter.

A contentious relationship between religious studies and theology complicates CHS’s position within Pagan studies. Despite emerging from religion departments at church-based colleges (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018, 26; Hughes 2020), religious studies over time has strove to separate itself from theology. Therefore, recalling Wittgenstein’s analogy of games, while theology remains a respectable game, Pagan studies tends to express interest in playing by the ‘rules’ of religious studies. Most Pagan studies scholars belong to anthropology, sociology, or religious studies departments. The AAR (and importantly, the CPSPU), is similarly devoted to religious studies. Many critiques of Pagan studies centre on the idea that scholars are not properly doing scholarship when they are engaged in theology. Criticisms of scholars in Pagan

57. Michael York, interview with Chris Miller, November 29, 2019.

58. These courses are drawn from the Fall 2019 Course Offerings (Cherry Hill Seminary, n.d.e.).

studies being too theological or advocating for their tradition may reflect the (perhaps unfair) reality that while theological explorations of Christianity are more readily permitted in religious studies, the same is not true for other religions. However, the fact remains that there is a greater likelihood that Pagan studies scholars will be seen as theological and criticized for doing such work. As a defensive strategy against such criticisms, this sometimes results in a sharper distinction between theology and religious studies among Pagan studies scholars, creating an awkward situation for spaces such as CHS.

Providing Legitimacy

CHS helps illuminate the occasionally fuzzy delineations between fields. Discussing the relationship between the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR) and the AAR, Nicole Kelley asks whether these two organizations even belong to the same field (2013, 336). Although many would likely answer that both organizations engage in religious studies, Kelley suggests that most NAASR members do not see AAR members as “doing legitimate scholarship on religion” (337). This distinction results from the disjuncture between theology and religious studies, and the assumption that the AAR is too theological. Building on McCutcheon’s assertion that theology “is data – not method – for scholars of religion” (2003, 93), Kelley adds, “most of what passes for scholarship in the AAR . . . is data for the real scholars associated with NAASR” (2013, 337). This quote might also aptly summarize the relationship between CHS and Pagan studies.

Granted, there are many scholars and students within CHS who make valuable contributions to Pagan studies, and conduct research that fits solidly within religious studies, just as (contrary to what Kelley suggests), there are many scholars in the AAR who conduct valuable

and insightful religious studies research. However, certain aspects of CHS, from its lack of accreditation to courses that simply instruct Pagans on how to practice Paganism, suggest that this school might sit somewhat outside of Pagan studies. Further, the graduate degrees that CHS offers, which represent the school's strongest claim to be doing religious studies scholarship, only represent a portion of the students and faculty. Most other courses function to train or accredit future Pagan leaders, and are thereby focused on serving the Pagan community rather than contributing to scholarly discourse about these communities. From this perspective, CHS does not produce Pagan studies scholarship, but rather produces data that Pagan studies scholars can analyze. For my purposes, this data includes how CHS facilitates legitimation for Paganism. The following section briefly outlines some of these processes.

By certifying leaders and helping Pagan leaders be recognized in public institutions, CHS primarily helps raise Paganism's external legitimacy. York suggests that ministerial accreditation helps Pagans become "bonified legitimate Pagan ministers" and engage in chaplaincy work.⁵⁹ This can lead to Pagan chaplains being recognized in public institutions, or Pagan leaders being represented on Interfaith councils. Further, CHS helps aspiring leaders to certify their expertise in more formal ways, which may contribute to the (largely decentralized) Pagan community recognizing certain prominent figures.

CHS also helps Pagans learn more about their own religious practices, thereby broadening or reinforcing beliefs. Courses can influence the paths that Pagans explore or the traditions and practices that one draws on in rituals. Whether taking one course or working through an entire degree, Pagans turn to this school as a site of authority and knowledge. The credentials of faculty, and the organizational infrastructure, also reinforce Paganism's

59. Michael York, interview with Chris Miller, November 29, 2019.

proclaimed academic outlook and background. For students, CHS thereby helps to solidify Paganism's internal legitimacy.

Finally, the school's ability to reinforce particular perspectives within Paganism is intertwined with its relationship to academia, and the authority that this confers. Given that its academic status is somewhat unclear due to its lack of accreditation, I offer the following example to highlight how worldview reinforcement and academic legitimacy are sometimes mutually reinforcing. Conflicts between cisgender-only women's groups and trans-affirming Pagans are an ongoing intra-community issue. Michelle Mueller explains, "LGBTQI Pagans have raised concerns about the gender binary in Wiccan theology, symbolic dyadic leadership, . . . and the exclusivity of biologically determined men's mysteries and women's mysteries" (2017, 250). In Fall 2015, Pagan author Ruth Barrett was scheduled to teach a CHS course titled "Becoming Women: First Bloods Rituals for Girls." Due to its "focus on menarche as the pivot point for becoming women," this course was criticized for being exclusionary towards trans folk (262).

Like many other courses at CHS, this one focused on how to understand or perform certain rituals. While the type of magic might be non-controversial in other courses, say, "The Ritual of Play and Game Design," the underlying worldview in this instance was more contentious. As the concept of gender fluidity becomes widely debated throughout society, this course, instructor, and CHS are seen as taking sides. The perspective that Barrett asserts through this course is that one can only become a woman through specific physical and biological changes that occur at puberty. Although CHS may not necessarily endorse all of the content being taught in each of its courses, students who take this course will have this particular social position concerning gender reinforced. This course (coupled with Barrett's stated views as

expressed in other forums) upset some Pagans who argued that it affirmed a cissexist understanding of gender. Outcry which began online resulted in one Pagan creating a petition urging CHS to dismiss Barrett as faculty, since the course's content and her expressed views would negatively affect trans students and allies (Mueller 2017, 263).

CHS responded to the controversy with a statement from president Jeffrey Albaugh and executive director Holli Emore (2015). In this statement, CHS supports Barrett through the language of academia. Paraphrasing a former University of Chicago president, the statement notes, "without a vibrant commitment to free and open inquiry, a university ceases to be a university." Further supporting their decision to not remove Barrett, the authors add, "upholding academic freedom is one of the criteria for accreditation." These references to academia's structures and conventions supported the idea that Barrett's course (however controversial) was protected as an extension of her academic freedom.

Ultimately, while some Pagans were upset, the four-week course was offered as planned. Considering that trans inclusion is an issue within Paganism and throughout broader society, I am not so much interested in Barrett being retained as a CHS faculty member, or with this course being offered. Rather, I am interested in how CHS framed their response to the outcry from community members. In their statement, Albaugh and Emore reference universities and accreditation to defend the stances of Barrett and CHS. However, these references seem to lack relevance for a number of reasons. Although offering a quote concerning when a "university ceases to be a university," CHS is not actually a university. Similarly, while upholding academic freedom might be a criteria for accreditation, CHS is not currently accredited. It is unclear whether the beliefs of Albaugh, Emore, or any other CHS faculty even align with Barrett. However, for my purposes, what is significant is the role of academic language in framing their

response. Despite lacking traditional markers of academic legitimacy, CHS likens itself to an accredited university, thereby possessing the concomitant features (i.e., academic freedom) that this status entails. This suggests two possibilities. On the one hand, CHS may be using academic language to legitimize their preferred social values, and legitimize contentious positions concerning gender. On the other hand, placed in the wake of a controversy, CHS may simply be using academic language to legitimize themselves as an academic institution. In other words, despite lacking accreditation at present, CHS can later claim that it had acted as an academic institution at an important juncture. In either case, CHS is able to accomplish particular goals by rhetorically framing its *relationship* to academia.

Where Does Cherry Hill Seminary Belong?

Within processes of institutionalization, many emergent fields develop departments or programs. Having achieved two other important benchmarks – conferences and a journal – this one continually eludes Pagan studies. On its surface, CHS checks off some relevant boxes, offering courses about Pagan issues taught by traditional scholars. CHS members often speak of grad programs, and particularly, graduate students taking graduate courses. Despite lacking formal accreditation (or a Bachelor’s degree not being required to enroll in such programs), these declarations help to elevate CHS above other similar Pagan institutions, and position CHS as an academic space. However, considering the content of some courses and lack of accreditation, CHS occasionally seems to represent a hub where Pagans study (or even a space which Pagan studies should study) rather than a Pagan studies hub. In other words, this space functions more to legitimize outlooks within Paganism — whether this means certifying leaders to perform chaplaincy work or supporting sides in intra-community debates — than it does to study

Paganism from a traditional religious studies perspective. Considering the ongoing efforts to one day apply for accreditation (Ward 2016) and the continued support that CHS receives from scholars in this field, this school remains an important space to observe. Particularly because the tensions between religious studies and theology have yet to be resolved in academia more broadly, it will be especially interesting to see how CHS continues to navigate similar issues.

Getting Your Foot Directly in the Door

This chapter highlighted three hubs for Pagan studies: a program unit in the American Academy of Religion, a peer-reviewed journal, and a Pagan seminary. The first two hubs are outlets that sub-fields traditionally develop. They offer respectable spaces to present scholarship about a topic, giving specialists a home to situate their work and offering non-specialists an access point to recognize or approach a new topic. Especially when hubs are affiliated with larger academic bodies (the AAR and Equinox) the research produced therein implicitly embodies that legitimacy.

Regarding the latter hub discussed in this chapter, CHS represents a valuable institution for Paganism. Learning about Paganism facilitates internal legitimation, as does training leaders who will serve communities. Producing leaders with degrees may also facilitate external legitimacy (provided that other institutions recognize these degrees). While scholars lend CHS academic prestige – demonstrating how scholarship and religious communities intersect – CHS's value for Pagan studies is questionable.

In addition to solidifying this emergent field, these academic spaces can also help legitimize Paganism. Through topics explored (or not explored), scholars can paint Heathens as racially inclusive or reinforce gender binaries in Wicca, thereby crafting a particular image of

Paganism or supporting particular beliefs. Existent issues that each hub reflects, including insider dominance, flexible labels, and connecting to broader academic fields, offer themes that subsequent chapters continue to address.

Although they represent significant steps in institutionalization, the CPSPU and *The Pomegranate* also highlight potentially troubling trends for emergent fields. Hubs offer space to situate research, but they can also be counter-productive in terms of academic legitimacy. Concerning the general health of Pagan studies, the 2017 CPSPU self-review recognizes that the field has a “traditional set of allied units,” including ritual studies, NRMs, religion and ecology, and women and religion (4). While Paganism’s history and beliefs renders these connections inevitable, this review adds that the unit suffers from “a degree of insularity that has not served it well” (4).

Together, *The Pomegranate* and CPSPU exemplify the sectarianism that sub-fields can produce. Highlighting how this unit contributes to broader scholarly conversations, the 2017 self-review lists publications emerging from its sessions. Of all the publications that emerged from presentations between 2012 and 2016, one from Magliocco was published in *Journal of Folklore Research*, one by Zwissler was published as a chapter in *Emotions in the History of Witchcraft*, and Calico’s 2012 presentation forms part of his monograph (2018). All other publications appear in various editions of *The Pomegranate*. While it seems intuitive that scholars would submit research about Pagans to the field’s only journal, overlap between these hubs reveals the field’s insulation. Highlighting that Pagan studies may lack a wide reach, all sessions attract the same general mix of scholars, and the presentations that are published tend to appear in *The Pomegranate*. There is also considerable overlap among scholars. In addition to Clifton as editor, associate editor Caroline Tully, and reviews editor Christopher Chase, *The Pomegranate*’s

editorial board includes Ezzy, Harvey, Griffin, Magliocco, Salomonsen, York, and Jenny Butler who have all served (or currently serve) within the CPSPU leadership (The Pomegranate, n.d.a.).⁶⁰ To some degree, close links between these hubs are intentional. Berry calls these hubs “dual outlets for thinking about the academic study of Paganism,” adding that the work of one space feeding into the other represents “a strategic vision of Pagan studies.”⁶¹ Ironically however, Pagan studies may be disadvantaged because it interests enough scholars to merit a unit and journal, but struggles to transcend these spaces. Having distinct homes means, as one scholar suggests, that Pagan Studies might lack “motivation to speak to an audience beyond the community that it typically gathers.”⁶² Scholars may take for granted certain concepts, like what a Pagan is, or why British megaliths are important to Witches, leaving many important assumptions unspoken and making research less conversant with other fields. While hubs allow scholars to consider Pagan studies a field, this might be counter-intuitive to expanding interest in a given topic.

For fields to be healthy, scholars cannot only be talking to one another. Clifton shares, “since we’ve had the Pagan studies unit, there has been some discussion about how, ‘hey people, don’t present all your papers here. Try to get your papers into other units as well.’”⁶³ Noting the importance of connecting to other domains, Luhrmann explains, “people need to organize panels in which there are not just Pagan scholars. If you wanna make your work relevant to other people, you’ve gotta get those other people on your panels. And present your work as an example of this much larger theme.”⁶⁴ Zwissler adds, “what’s really powerful is being able to

60. Salomonsen, Griffin, and York are no longer listed on the editorial board, but were as recently as 2019.

61. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

62. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, June 25, 2019.

63. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

64. Tanya M. Luhrmann, interview with Chris Miller, October 14, 2019.

bring Paganism into work that gets seen by other people in other contexts as well. So, I make a point ... of not *only* publishing in Pagan studies spaces.”⁶⁵ Highlighting how scholars must transcend Pagan studies to have a greater impact, Magliocco similarly shares that her work is respected by colleagues “because my work is seen to have made contributions beyond just that tiny sector of academia.”⁶⁶ This strategy carries important personal and professional benefits, helping such scholars to reach broader audiences and gain wider credibility. Despite these benefits, and looking from the perspective of the health of the field, this strategy can unfortunately weaken Pagan studies’ most central hubs. When the research that speaks to broad discourses winds up in other spaces, then hubs are left with the work that is less accessible to wider audiences, thereby reinforcing assumptions that Pagan studies only speaks to itself.

Creating specialized spaces is generally considered a marker of growing academic interest, and therefore a field’s growing legitimacy. Creating new spaces also highlights that “academic organizations tend to respond to knowledge change with additive solutions” (Gumport and Snyderman 2002, 376). Despite initial struggles to establish the CPSPU, José Cabezón notes that from the mid-1990s onwards, the AAR increasingly fostered more specific sub-divisions (2020). The number of AAR units has doubled roughly every ten years since the 1990s (Bauman, Cassel, and Puckett 2020). This raises the question of whether a new hub represents increased respect for that field, or simply that organizations prescribe creating new spaces, regardless of a topic’s perceived importance.⁶⁷ The various hubs that provide space for Pagan studies are cited by scholars as proof of this subject’s growing legitimacy. However, as

65. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

66. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

67. Reflecting the fact that the AAR adds many new units each year, yet eliminates relatively few, Gumport and Snyderman add that completely eliminating “structural units” is rare (2002, 376). This suggests that the CPSPU is likely safe from being eliminated, though this may not necessarily indicate the field’s health or strength.

Pagan studies remains represented by only these hubs (and not, for example, by departments, programs, or chairs) the field's institutionalizations seems somewhat stalled.

Chapter 5 – Getting Your Foot (Indirectly) in the Door

Studies of how knowledge develops in academia often focus on formal programs (Gumport and Snyderman 2002) or departments (Blau 1973). This chapter highlights less direct entryways for new fields, through courses across universities and what I term para-academic conferences, which combine scholars and practitioners.

University courses, which raise the profile of a topic, are crucial for emergent fields. Simply appearing on course calendars signals to students, scholars, and administrators that a topic is worthy of inquiry. When the title of that course is ‘REL 3132 – Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism,’ this explicitly signals that Paganism can be understood as a legitimate religion. Further, a course’s syllabus consolidates emic and etic perspectives into a cohesive package, signaling what claims about Paganism are authentic. Finally, courses can destigmatize a group’s image and connect Paganism to broader issues.

While courses appear in formal institutions (universities) and go through a vetting process (departmental, and ultimately, senate approval), I classify these as an indirect entryway because of their uneven existence and appearance. Courses are shaped by the diverse contexts of where they appear and who creates them. Some courses about Paganism have been offered

consistently since the 1970s; others were offered only once. While some courses only cover Paganism, some courses on such broader topics as NRMs or environmentalism may discuss Pagans in a single week. This one-week emphasis can change depending on who is teaching that semester. Granted, while the topics covered from article to article might differ widely in *The Pomegranate*, one can still point to that journal as a discrete entity. Courses, in contrast, are far more variable in their appearance. Although a significant marker of growth for academic fields, irregularity across courses places them in this chapter.

Para-academic conferences represent another indirect entryway. Again, these events differ greatly from one another. Some are affiliated with larger organizations while others are not; some happen regularly (e.g., annually), and others are sporadic. These events are also indirect entryways for the field due to their ambiguous academic status. Scholars present at and attend these events, but so do Pagans without academic credentials. Further, scholars attending these events are not necessarily there as academics. While some classify these events as outlets for Pagan studies, others question whether these events are suitably academic.

Pagan Studies in the Classroom

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst calls job ads the “medium” through which scholars “communicate and produce who is (or should be considered) an expert” on a given topic (2020, 917). While Pagan studies lacks specific job ads, Morgenstein Fuerst still informs my discussion of Pagan studies courses. She notes that since Islamic studies job ads are generally written by experts in other fields, this leads to ads that reflect “untrained assumptions about Islam, Muslims, and the study thereof” (917). Similarly, while scholars prepare their own content, many are assigned by their department to teach courses with certain titles or approaches. Paganism appears

in some courses which I call “Pagan-centric” (e.g., one titled “Witches, Druids, and Heathens”), in thematic courses (“Magic, Witchcraft, and the Supernatural”), and may occupy one week in very broad courses (“Women in Religion” or “Religion and the Environment”). As department heads rely on their recipe knowledge, or the most essential and accessible information about Paganism, this occasionally reinforces certain core characteristics of Paganism. Morgenstein Fuerst adds that assumptions about Islam – perpetuated by job ads – constrain research by encouraging scholars to position themselves as experts on a narrow range of topics (namely, the Middle East, Arabic, and texts). Although there are other ways to study Islam, departments seek scholars who can discuss these specific topics. Pagan studies scholars are similarly constrained to emphasize such themes as magic, nature, or women’s spirituality in their teaching. While there are other ways to study Paganism, these themes dominate courses, influencing what topics Pagan studies scholars will likely explore. Finally, Morgenstein Fuerst notes that while for many scholars, “teaching is not the primary element of our jobs or a reflection of our research’s nuance” (936), examining teaching is still important. Teaching – or more specifically, how scholars position their research to make them suited to teach certain courses (to certain numbers of students) – helps scholars maintain their positions.

Surveying the Field

Describing the general dearth of Pagan studies at the classroom level, Reid shares, “you do a degree with a Pagan focus, you never expect to teach in this field,” adding that most of her teaching is in broad Sociology courses.¹ When beginning this project, I anticipated that lack of Pagan-centric courses was shaped by prejudice against the field. However, scholars shared that

1. Síân Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

this was rarely the case.² Jennifer Snook describes emphatic support from her department to teach “Witches, Druids, and Heathens”: “The Chair was like ... you teach what you wanna teach. Everybody has a dream class.”³

Sub-fields require interest to succeed. The ability of Pagan studies to overlap with popular culture, feminism, and magic helps make courses about Paganism popular among students. Gumport and Snyderman write, “anticipated student demand plays an important role in decisions about the establishment and disestablishment of academic programs” (2002, 397). Popularity with students similarly helped women’s and Black studies courses gain high enrollments (Arthur 2009, 80; Rojas 2007, 58), which helped build larger departments. Indicating their popularity and revealing why faculty support such courses, Pagan-centric courses occasionally appear in news articles announcing “Unique Courses Offered at Canadian Universities” (Patel 2017). Indeed, scholars often call these “bums in seats” courses.

To better understand how Paganism is represented across schools, I conducted a search of course offerings at Canadian universities.⁴ From over 75 Canadian universities, Paganism is explicitly represented (either in a course title or available description) in 40 courses at 30 different schools.⁵ Exploring the departments, titles, and descriptions for these courses helps understand Paganism’s positioning in academia.

2. Granted, the lack of courses discussing Paganism is likely also related to the more marginal population of Pagans. Comparing the populations of religious communities in the US for example, there are over 200 million Christians, over 6 million Jews, nearly 3 million Muslims, 2 million Hindus, and just under one million Pagan and New Age practitioners (Pew Research Center 2015b). Although, as chapter 7 explores, there are deeper ideological reasons shaping why certain groups dominate religious studies discourse, departments also tend to offer courses exploring the largest religious communities. Although some scholars in this field express a desire for greater representation in curricula, many also acknowledge that this lacuna is understandable given Paganism’s size.

3. Jennifer Snook, interview with Chris Miller, September 12, 2019.

4. I conducted this search through the course calendars of all Canadian schools. Terms included Pagan; Witchcraft; Wicca*; Druid*; Magic*; and Occult. Instances when “pagan” was mentioned in courses about ancient Rome or when Paganism was not mentioned in a course on magic were disregarded, since these courses likely do not explore contemporary Paganism.

5. A complete list can be found in [Appendix D](#).

Most courses (30) are offered through religious studies departments, reinforcing that this is Pagan studies' disciplinary home. Other common departments include anthropology (seven courses); sociology (three); and women's or gender studies (four). Only three courses foreground Paganism in the manner of "Introduction to *blank tradition*" courses. Of this small list however, "Celtic Paganism" (St. Francis Xavier University) and "Paganism" (Dalhousie University) also cover pagan traditions from antiquity, meaning the emphasis is not entirely on contemporary forms of Paganism. Granted, tradition-based courses are simply not some scholars' preferred approach. Luhrmann explains, "I never taught a course that was solely on Paganism. I have taught courses that focused on magic, that focused on witchcraft, but ... I would teach different approaches to witchcraft. Different ways of thinking about witchcraft."⁶ Pike similarly teaches "Religion in America" and "Religion and Nature," in which Paganism occupies one or two weeks. When asked if she encountered problems having a Pagan-focused course approved, she explains, "I think it's just my own interest...to look at phenomena in comparative perspective."⁷ Although partly a result of preference, the overall lack of Pagan-centric courses reinforces Paganism's overlooked nature in academia. While departments often offer tradition-based courses, dedicated to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Sikhism, Pagan studies (and therefore Paganism) lacks such representation.

Eleven different courses explore Paganism through intersections with women's spirituality. Since many Pagans are women and female deities and leaders occupy central roles, Paganism's positioning in broad courses on women and religion is fitting. Such courses help to boost Paganism's legitimacy by introducing more students to the existence of these traditions. Positioning Paganism as a "women's religion" also helps the field enter more spaces, offering

6. Tanya M. Luhrmann, interview with Chris Miller, October 14, 2019.

7. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

scholars who specialize in Pagan studies another course they are qualified to teach. However, courses that also study women in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism throughout the semester are equally likely to be taught by someone who specializes in these traditions. “Goddesses in Myth and History” at the University of Saskatchewan (n.d.), for example, “investigates the role of goddesses in religion from prehistory to the present, east and west.” Another course, “Women and Religion” at Capilano University (n.d.), “examines ideas about and roles of women in the major religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) as well as native religions, Wicca and goddess religions.” Such courses offer legitimacy by promoting awareness of Paganism and by affirming the religion’s feminist outlook, but may not substantially improve the academic profile of Pagan studies.

NRM is another category that helps Pagan studies scholars occupy more spaces.⁸ However, like women’s spirituality, Paganism generally only occupies a portion of the semester in such courses, thereby only offering a degree of exposure. Further, while Paganism’s connection to women’s spirituality represents an affirming comparison, this is not true for the NRM category. Eight courses explicitly reference cults in their title. Such titles likely attract student attention, but reinforce perceptions concerning new religions and deviance. In addition to Pagans, course descriptions list such groups as Scientology, Branch Davidians, and Heaven’s Gate, or reference “tragic endings.” Implicit comparisons to more stigmatized NRMs shapes the perception of all other groups. As will be discussed in chapter 7, despite the exposure that the NRM label affords and regardless of the fact that most professors likely deconstruct the term cult in the very first lecture, these associations cause some scholars to distance their work from NRM studies.

8. Although many schools offer courses on NRMs (and likely explore Pagans), twelve courses explicitly reference Paganism in their title or description.

One final category of courses connect Paganism to broader themes in popular culture, which are particularly popular among students. Courses such as “Esotericism, Magic, & the Occult” (Mount Royal University) emphasize Witchcraft as mysterious and exotic. “Witches, Vampires, and Zombies: Anthropology of the Supernatural” (University of British Columbia) links Pagan communities to exciting fictional themes. Student interest enhances the success of courses, and by association, can boost the broader field’s relevance. While Pagans only comprise a portion of such courses, their mass appeal provides larger audiences for destigmatization and exposure.

How Courses Legitimize Communities

University course calendars represent litmus tests of which traditions are considered important. A tradition receiving an “Introduction to...” course signals that group “joining the club” of the so-called world religions (Beyer 2006, 256). To be sure, scholars may not outwardly advocate for Paganism’s legitimacy when teaching. However, legitimacy is an important by-product of exposure. When asked how (or whether) she discusses the legitimacy of Pagan communities, Zwissler explains, “I like to start from a place of, of course it is. Of course Paganism is valid ... now let’s get to the fun conversations.”⁹ Another scholar highlights the blurry line between exposure and advocacy, sharing that they tell students, “if you’re in a course like this, you’d better be prepared to understand [that] people have different faiths that are as important to them as yours are ... to you,” adding, “So, in that sense, I guess I try to highlight the legitimacy of Paganism as one form of belief system.”¹⁰ With promoting acceptance of

9. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

10. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

diversity as a general goal, and with Pagans being one example of religious diversity, this teaching approach legitimizes Paganism as a community that is worthy of respect. In the twenty-plus years that Shelley Rabinovitch has taught “Witchcraft, Magic, and Occult Traditions,” she reaches roughly 1,000 students per year.¹¹ Even the thirty students who enroll in smaller seminar courses discover that Paganism exists, is a legitimate religion, and a legitimate subject for academic exploration. Exposure is especially important since there are no public Pagan figures, and most mainstream fictional representations of Pagans are sensationalist or inaccurate. Scholars, in contrast, present students with accounts that normalize this religion.

Courses also engender legitimacy by affirming positive claims. Reinforcing how some practitioners perceive their community, a women’s spirituality course legitimizes assertions that Paganism is a feminist religion. Courses about Paganism in relation to nature similarly reinforce environmentalism as a purported essence. Drawing comparisons between ancient goddess religions and modern Wicca reinforces some practitioners’ proclaimed historical connections. Especially in survey courses that encompass many traditions, Paganism ends up being essentialized to certain core features, since this is all there is time to explore. Relying on recipe knowledge, scholars may foreground the role of the tripartite goddess in Paganism (without having time to interrogate the latent patriarchy within these idealized feminine roles) or describe Pagan theology surrounding nature (without having time to explore how Pagans engage with the environment in their everyday lives).¹² Lack of time in a semester can result in scholars reifying emic claims, thereby legitimizing certain understandings of Paganism.

11. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

12. Granted, since my analysis is based on a close examination of course syllabi and titles, but not the actual content of lectures, it is possible that some instructors do indeed spend time critiquing Paganism’s gender dualism, essentialism, and complementarianism. However, due to the texts which are often assigned, and, as will be discussed, the challenges of introducing students to Wicca’s history, beliefs, and practices before they could even

Pagan-centric courses also often attract Pagan students. Describing typical reactions from such students, Shawn Arthur shares, “I never dreamed that I would be able to study this.”¹³ Arthur adds, “They were all kind of amazed that someone at the university studied this ... [and] that we weren’t just straightforward, all Christianity, all the time.”¹⁴ Mitchell J. Chang describes similar reactions from Asian Americans taking Asian American studies courses (1999). Representation is affirmative, and seeing one’s beliefs examined from a scholarly perspective can reinforce this identity as legitimate or important. One scholar suggests that because they openly identify as Pagan, this magnifies the validation that students feel. They “legitimize” and “validate” this identity, “by being an intellectually-oriented person” with an “interest in contemporary Paganism.”¹⁵ Describing student responses, this scholar shares, “thank god this is happening ... [and] that I met someone who’s a Pagan and a scholar.”¹⁶ Offering a similar perspective on this process, Ewing-Meyer shares, “seeing myself ... represented in Pagan studies was like finding a home within academia.”¹⁷ Ewing-Meyer adds, “it was at that point that I was talking about my Paganism as an academic in the social sciences that I was like ‘okay maybe I should start looking into Pagan studies as a field that I could potentially grow into and start to contribute to.’”¹⁸ Discovering the field empowers some students to combine their religious identity with their academic pursuits.

understand such critiques, courses that only dedicate one week in a semester to Paganism are more likely to rely on recipe knowledge about these communities.

13. Shawn Arthur, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

14. Shawn Arthur, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

15. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, February 6, 2020.

16. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, February 6, 2020.

17. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

18. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

Classroom Challenges

Despite Pagan studies having a presence at some universities, other scholars face challenges implementing courses, revealing broader concerns for the field. Describing issues related to identity, one scholar shares that because they teach about Paganism, they do not publicly self-identify, fearing that this might provoke negative reactions towards their teaching, or be “[mis]construed as advocating for it.”¹⁹ Ezzy is similarly tight-lipped about his identity when teaching, though he openly self-identifies in other scholarly spaces (2015, 72). Raising an additional issue that Pagan scholars must manage, lines between introducing and promoting a worldview may easily blur (or rather, be perceived as blurring) when it comes to teaching.

Another challenge concerns general lack of knowledge about Pagans. Basic information is needed before exploring deeper issues. Unlike courses that may rely on students’ familiarity with baptism or Jesus dying on the cross, scholars teaching about Pagans must explain collective effervescence (or similar concepts) to students, and also outline, for example, basic Druidic rituals. This may first require explaining what a Druid is or why the solstice is important, which might prompt related questions, including why Stonehenge is significant and how it is connected to the modern Druids we are studying now. Filling knowledge gaps is even more challenging in courses like “Religion and Gender” where Paganism occupies only one week. General ignorance challenges scholars who want to go beyond introducing Pagans to actually analyzing these groups. Since there is much preliminary groundwork to cover, recipe knowledge can paper over the nuance of on-the-ground realities of Pagan communities.

A further issue is constructing courses. Scholars building a new course traditionally have many resources, from taking similar courses as students to online syllabus repositories. The

19. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

AAR's collection, for example, offers over 30 syllabi under the heading "Christianity." Sub-headings like Christianity - Middle Ages or Women in the Bible offer further examples of how to teach about Christianity, including course titles, week-by-week topics, and readings. The broad scope of Pagan studies complicates course construction. Which groups are Pagan, and which are not? Are these religions ancient or modern? Are media depictions of witches even related to Paganism? Since these questions lack consensus in Pagan studies, there is little clarity for how to teach about Paganism. A common formula for courses is "Magic, Witchcraft and *something else*," but even this last term can differ, including the supernatural, the New Age, or the occult. Courses exploring the supernatural might explore belief in ghosts, while those exploring New Age may discuss crystal healing. These comparisons thereby create different impressions of Paganism.

Not only is there diversity in course titles, but analyzing syllabi reveals that there is no consensus textbook in Pagan studies.²⁰ While Davy's *Introduction to Pagan Studies* was written with the intention to be used in classrooms, its wider adoption remains unclear. Instead, many courses combine readings from different sources and scholars. Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* and Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* (though neither are scholarly) appear on many syllabi. While courses about different traditions often rely on primary sources, assigning readings from these Pagan figures reinforces their emic perspectives as authoritative. Assigning these books (and not others) can reinforce a particular perception of Paganism.

Turning to more scholarly texts, Magliocco's *Witching Culture* is quite common, as are readings from Berger, Hutton, York, Clifton, and Harvey. These are all prominent Pagan studies

20. Going beyond the discussion of Pagan studies courses at Canadian universities, this section explores syllabi from various institutions across North America. Granted, I did not observe the actual lecture content of such courses. My analysis is based instead on assigned readings, weekly topics, and course objectives.

scholars who generally offer a consistent image of Paganism. Their continued placement on syllabi reflects their status in the field, but also reinforces a particular sympathetic approach as the proper way to research Paganism. While the above scholars generally form the core of most syllabi, much like courses that explore “Magic, Witchcraft, and *something else*,” many courses explore additional perspectives on Paganism in the later weeks of a semester. However, articles like Mattias Gardell’s “White Racist Religions in the United States” (2005) and Martin Lepage’s “A Lokian Family: Queer And Pagan Agency in Montreal” (2013) – which appear on two different syllabi – present decidedly different images of Paganism. Lacking a consensus textbook both reflects and contributes to uncertainty concerning what exactly Pagan studies is. While there are obviously also variations in how Judaism or other traditions are taught, there is generally greater consensus on such issues as what beliefs or groups will be discussed in a semester, creating more consistency in teaching.

Pagan studies also lacks major efforts to develop consistency in teaching. In the AAR unit or on the Pagan studies listserv, there are few if any discussions of how this field should exist in the classroom. Email threads seeking “Reading Suggestions for Goddess Religions course?” occasionally appear, but are infrequent. Conference sessions or journal volumes rarely, if ever, discuss Pagan studies pedagogy. Scholars generally construct courses with relatively little guidance from the wider field, demonstrating why courses represent an indirect means of institutionalization.²¹

Beyond the content of Pagan studies courses being inconsistent, some attempts to teach about Paganism are especially contentious. Especially in private, religiously affiliated schools,

21. Recalling that the NRM or women’s spirituality courses discussed above may not be taught by scholars who specialize in Pagan studies, a lack of consensus on how to teach about Pagans means this disjointed appearance is likely to continue.

Paganism is an uncomfortable topic for administrators.²² One scholar previously taught a comparative religions course and another on religion and health that introduced Pagan topics throughout the semester. After several administrative changes, they were told that Paganism should not form a component of any course. Another scholar shared that while teaching at a public university in the Southern US, they taught a general course on nature religions and several directed study courses. Upon moving to a nearby private university, they were unable to teach similar courses. Additionally, their very involvement in the field was questioned. Although they explained to administrators that Paganism is a topic that interests them, the administration “really didn’t care for that. They had some real problems with that.” These stories highlight that context also shapes the disjointed nature of Pagan studies courses. Some scholars described their Pagan-centric courses as “bums-in-seats” or “money-maker” courses, of which faculty were especially supportive. Speaking of broader NRM courses, one scholar shares, “they really like that I’m bringing these NRMs and tying them into contemporary politics, and issues like climate change and that sort of thing. So, the administration seems very welcoming to these kinds of classes.”²³ In other cases however, administrators and other faculty are actively opposed to teaching about this topic. This creates serious challenges to establishing a consistent presence for Pagan studies in the classroom.

Pagan Studies and the University Structure

As the above survey of courses demonstrates, students rarely encounter Pagan studies in a direct manner. Rather than through specific courses, most students or faculty who are interested

22. Since this section discusses scholars who have faced challenges with their administration, I have anonymized most quotes.

23. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

in this topic weave Paganism into standard curricula. Offering advice to prospective students, Pagan author Thorn Mooney outlines how one can direct their study to Pagan topics (2015b). After informing her readers that one will likely never find a class titled “Contemporary Paganism,” she advises searching strategically: “Begin by signing up for classes in a religious studies, anthropology, or folklore department,” adding “When your professor assigns a book review or an essay . . . that’s when you pull out your personal interests.” During seminar courses, Mooney reflects, “whenever the conversation turned to religion and sexuality, I brought up Crowley, Gardner, or the Church of All Worlds.” By actively inserting Paganism into broader conversations, she suggests that one can earn their degree in Pagan studies, even though this may not appear on one’s diploma. To a degree, this advice echoes the experiences of many Pagan studies scholars. Ewing-Meyer completed a creative writing assignment that explored issues of one man’s Pagan upbringing.²⁴ Zwissler wrote an undergraduate Honours Thesis comparing historical and contemporary Witchcraft.²⁵ Pike focused an ethnography assignment in a Masters anthropology class on a local Pagan community.²⁶ Since specialized courses are rare, students mostly encounter Paganism through independent projects.

Pagan studies also comes up against the bureaucratic structures of universities. In 2019, the University of Ottawa drastically reduced all non-core courses due to budget cuts, resulting in a longstanding Pagan-centric course being slashed from three sections to one.²⁷ That such a popular (and consistently successful) course could be reduced reveals bureaucratic constraints. Describing his teaching experiences, Calico shares, “I think students are interested in it. But

24. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

25. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

26. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

27. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

among scholars who study other fields, not so much.”²⁸ Paganism intersecting with courses on popular culture or exotic topics helps to consistently attract student interest but may not convince administrators that this field merits greater attention. Further, breadth requirements for religious studies majors often prioritize Christianity, Judaism, and other world religions. Zwissler suggests, “invisibility is more a symptom of broader Christian centrism.”²⁹ Many fields seek greater representation, and Paganism’s smaller impact on sociocultural affairs (compared to Islam, Indigenous religions, or other emergent sub-fields) renders the topic a low priority.

Predictably, Pagan studies also lacks presence at the graduate level. Not only are graduate courses about Paganism virtually non-existent, but some scholars expressed difficulty finding someone willing to supervise a project about Pagans (Rountree 2015b). Pike adds that even with a supportive supervisor, colleagues may be unconvinced that Pagan studies “would make a marketable and academically respectable dissertation topic” (2015, 174). Revealing the hurdles some face before even beginning their research, one scholar shares that in the early 1990s, they still had to dedicate a chapter of their dissertation (and write an entire comprehensive exam) “on whether Paganism even qualified as a religion.”³⁰

Teaching and supervision reveal how a field’s development is connected to navigating bureaucratic structures. Describing how knowledge typically develops in academic fields, Frickel and Gross write, “intellectuals at the pinnacle of disciplinary status structures have the power to define . . . path-breaking scholarship,” offering a distinct advantage to students trained under such authorities (2005, 212). However, limiting their ability to impart knowledge to mentees, many leading Pagan studies scholars are not in positions that enable them to supervise students.

28. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019.

29. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

30. Sîan Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

Zwissler shares that, despite not supervising students, she occasionally finds herself fielding questions for colleagues: “they come around and ask, ‘hey you do a thing, and I’ve got this student whose kind of interested, and I don’t know what to tell them’ ... And then I get to say, ‘Here, let me give you some names. These are some of the directions that people have gone in.’”³¹ Other scholars offer mentorship as an outside reader on dissertations. Although valuable, this support differs from the guidance offered by one’s supervisor.³²

A common experience for scholars is that their supervisor specialized in studying a specific NRM, but rarely had experience (or interest) studying Paganism.³³ To be sure, many Pagan studies scholars describe positive relationships with supervisors, gaining valuable support and advice. However, support may not necessarily translate into the type of guidance that other students (who share their supervisor’s specialty) may receive. Describing issues encountered when supervised by non-specialists, Clifton explains, “they were really good professors, I really respected them all, but when it came to ... Pagan stuff in particular, they had no background. So, when I would write a paper ... I really couldn’t get great feedback, other than on methodology.”³⁴ Scholars may find supportive supervisors with adjacent interests, but this may not equate to training within this specific field. Without targeted advice (or even secondary guidance from an outside reader) proposed graduate projects might be rejected before they can even begin. Further, those that proceed without any specialist guidance may be weaker due to this lack of advice. A specialist can advise students on not just how to navigate issues in one’s

31. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

32. Revealing the benefits of supervisors who are specialists, Ewing-Meyer (whose supervisor straddled Pagan studies and religion and culture more broadly) shares, “the supervisor was pivotal for me, to know how to sink my teeth into this topic, in a way that’s analytically useful and understood by the faculty” (Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019).

33. For a field as broad as NRM studies, this is a typical relationship, since scholars use a set of overarching methods, theories, and frameworks to study different groups.

34. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

project, or how to situate one's work in Pagan studies, but how to situate Pagan studies research so that it is relevant or legible to other fields. A lack of supervisors hurts the field's institutional memory and generally hinders students in advancing knowledge.

Religious studies is dominated by Christianity in terms of course offerings, and even by how religion is conceptualized. A typical department includes scholars specializing in Christianity, Judaism, and Asian religions. Popular specializations for further positions include Islam, or more recently, Indigenous or African diasporic traditions. The rare tenure-track positions that come up are highly unlikely to be filled by a Pagan studies specialist. Berry for example, specializes in American religion and religion and violence. Teaching about these topics, NRMs, and the environment, Pagan topics occasionally comprise a portion of some of his courses, but never a central focus.³⁵ While it is hard enough for any scholar to land a tenure-track job, and harder still for those who specialize in religious studies, Berry shares, "it becomes exponentially harder if you're working in a sub-field that people don't necessarily recognize or appreciate."³⁶ Hiring practices push Pagan studies into a topic that some scholars choose as a secondary or tertiary research interest.

Due to the dearth of Pagan courses (and employment opportunities), several scholars became concerned with their general marketability during their graduate studies. This results in some switching to adjacent topics or disciplines, or some shifting away entirely from academic careers. Writing a Master's thesis about Witchcraft in the Eastern US, Arthur shifted to studying Chinese religions for his PhD. This shift was partly based on Harvey advising him that there is no "Chair of Contemporary Paganism." Paraphrasing the advice he received, Arthur adds, "I should study something that is going to provide a job for me. And then I can do contemporary

35. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

36. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

Paganisms secondarily.”³⁷ Luhrmann’s dissertation advisor similarly told her ““this is not the kind of project that typically gets people a job.””³⁸ The financial risks that scholars potentially face highlight further challenges to institutionalizing Pagan studies. Departments being unlikely to seek experts on Paganism creates a trickle-down effect, leading to less research produced in this subject area.

Legitimacy in the Classroom

University courses help validate Pagan studies as a field, and help legitimize certain understandings of Pagan communities. Courses introduce students to a community that is underrepresented in society. Since representation is facilitated by scholars (and not the director of a Witchcraft-themed blockbuster movie), courses generally affirm a positive depiction of Pagans. Pagan students especially value seeing their community represented in academic settings. When courses are taught by a Pagan scholar, legitimation is magnified. Finally, many thematic courses gain consistently high enrollments, which helps legitimize Pagan studies as a field, as specialists become more employable, and research about Pagans reaches wider audiences.

Pagan studies benefits from its ability to connect to broader discourses, and especially courses that pull on popular culture, folklore, and magic. However, these courses are also emblematic of challenges facing Pagan studies. Describing her popular “Anthropology of the Supernatural” course (which attracts 150 students), Magliocco shares, “it doesn’t necessarily translate into interest in Paganism. Because these people are there to find out about vampires and

37. Shawn Arthur, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

38. Tanya M. Luhrmann, interview with Chris Miller, October 14, 2019.

zombies.”³⁹ Paganism is represented in such courses, but they are relatively ineffective recruiting grounds for the field. While this one course is quite popular, Magliocco notes, “if I taught a course on say, the modern Pagan religions, I don’t think that I would get a huge enrolment.”⁴⁰ When 150 students take a course that pairs Witches with zombies, most do so to satisfy an elective or distribution requirement (while still being entertained). Only a handful of students would take an upper-level seminar that specifically explores Pagan traditions. Some of those students will only take that course because they are Pagan, with no interest in pursuing the academic study of Paganism. This leaves only one or two students from that seminar who might go on to pursue graduate studies exploring Paganism. Finally, Arthur’s experiences highlight that even some graduate students might be dissuaded from pursuing the topic further. While Paganism is therefore represented in curricula (in certain contexts), this does not necessarily help the field recruit more scholars or gain a foothold in academia.

Para-Academic Conferences

Pagan studies also enters the academy indirectly through events that I term para-academic conferences, devoted specifically to exploring Pagan topics. At large academic conferences, there might be one or two presentations related to Pagan studies.⁴¹ The events that this section explores are smaller than traditional conferences, but devote considerably more attention to Paganism. I term these events “para-academic” because while they promote themselves as scholarly (and indeed, attract professional scholars), they also incorporate practitioners and their

39. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

40. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

41. Even the AAR, with a specific Pagan studies unit, only hosts three or four sessions dedicated to Pagan topics each year.

perspectives. Through three specific events, this section explores how Pagans and Pagan studies intersect and how scholarship is occasionally used to legitimize certain understandings of Paganism.

Conference on Current Pagan Studies

The Conference on Current Pagan Studies (CCPS) is held annually at Claremont Graduate University (CGU). Organizers suggest that this event represents “a bridge between Academia, The Pagan Community, and members of a diverse religious and spiritual community” (Conference on Current Pagan Studies, n.d.a.). Dorothea Kahena Viale, who was involved in the Nature Religions Scholars Network and Pagan studies pre-conferences at the AAR, started this event in 2004 to help scholars prepare for larger conferences.⁴² The first event was quite successful, with 90 attendees and positive feedback. The second year’s event expanded to two days (a format that it retains), and attendance remained high. Conference leadership expanded when Alfred Surenyan (another Claremont student), responded to Viale’s request for support. Jeffrey Albaugh (current co-organizer) became involved several years later, and another team member, Lilith Nightsong, joined soon after.⁴³

The CCPS began as an official event of CGU’s Women’s Studies in Religion program, where Viale was a doctoral student at the time. This relationship with CGU provides important benefits. Credibility comes from declaring this conference an official event of the Women’s

42. Dorothea Kahena Viale, interview with Chris Miller, March 5, 2019.

43. Unfortunately, the CCPS lists no records of leadership, and figures with whom I spoke all mentioned different dates for when people joined. The leadership structure itself is also informal, with people listed as either Conference Committee Members (including Viale, Albaugh, Nightsong, and Surenyan) or Conference Staff (including Herleena Hunt and Arzel Johnson). William Blumberg is also listed as a Former Committee Member. (Conference on Current Pagan Studies, n.d.a.). Throughout, I call Albaugh and Viale co-organizers to reflect the more prominent role they take during the event.

Studies Program, or simply announcing CGU as the event site. Space is another, more practical benefit, offering free rooms and equipment.⁴⁴

Although conference literature suggests that it remains an official CGU event, the current and future statuses of this relationship seem tenuous. On CGU's website, for instance, the conference is not connected with the school in any visible manner. Further, faculty who first supported the conference have since retired, and no organizers are currently affiliated with CGU. Viale shares that she will need to retire from the conference at some point, adding, "I don't know who they [CGU] would accept as someone running the conference, to give us the free rooms."⁴⁵ The conference moving to another site would cause fees to increase enormously, potentially limiting the audience this event attracts. Additionally, with the 2021 and 2022 events taking place entirely through Zoom, it is unclear if the affiliation with CGU will remain once in-person events resume. Although this event's future is in flux, it has undoubtedly achieved success, organizing a conference annually for almost twenty years, attracting prominent scholars (including Clifton, York, and Bado), and hosting twenty presentations (and 50-60 attendees) each year.

The CCPS and Academic Legitimacy

Adopting certain conventions allows this event to position itself as an academic investigation of Pagan themes. Framing the event in this way has both practical benefits (the free rooms discussed above), and more abstractly, lends a certain weight and authority to the claims made by presenters. The event's very format, with paper presentations, moderated question

44. Early on, the conference also received some funding from CGU.

45. Dorothea Kahena Viale, interview with Chris Miller, March 5, 2019.

periods, keynote speakers, and roundtables, helps to engender an impression of academic legitimacy. Further, many speakers are professional scholars, holding MAs, MDivs, and PhDs in such fields as anthropology, sociology, and depth psychology. These degrees are often asserted through presenter biographies in the conference program, or on a presentation's first slide.

However, while some presentations (from both scholars and practitioners) would fit in at academic conferences, many would not, and function instead to legitimize certain perspectives. In 2019 for example, one speaker described her local community's "Black Arts Ice Cream Social" program; another offered autobiographical reflections on Paganism's last 50 years. These two examples are broadly representative of many presentations at this conference, with speakers sharing stories from their community or their own lives. Such talks offer many interesting details about Paganism, but contain no academic research. Identifying common issues in presentations, Hale suggests that strong, academic presentations should be "theoretically sound and engaging with some form of wider scholarship," adding, "if you've gone to a festival, say something about that festival in a wider context."⁴⁶ Unfortunately, many presentations at the CCPS fail to do so, with presenters merely describing or reflecting on their personal experiences. Presenters thereby use the conference's academic framework to legitimize certain claims.

Discrepancies between the content of presentations and how the conference advertises itself highlights how people control performances and impressions (Goffman 1956, 8). Organizers and attendees seek to craft the impression of an academic conference. Irving Goffman suggests, "*qua* performers, individuals are concerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized" (162). Various performative elements (e.g., displaying

46. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

credentials, a university lecture hall) help to engineer the convincing impression of an academic conference. Goffman describes social establishments as “any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place” (152). Universities are one space where academic conferences frequently occur. People with degrees giving twenty-minute presentations (followed by five minutes of moderated questions) are further characteristics of this type of activity. These elements help craft the impression of an academic conference, and the concomitant assumptions of an objective or more critical approach to discussing a given topic.

The conference further cultivates academic legitimacy by linking itself to more traditional academic spaces. In terms of attendees and presenters, there is overlap between the AAR’s Pagan studies unit and this event, but no formal relationship. Nevertheless, Viale’s biography in each year’s program asserts that she “serves as the president of the American Academy of Religions, Western Regional” (Conference on Current Pagan Studies, n.d.b.). However, this is inaccurate. Both Viale and Albaugh are presently co-chairs of a Pagan studies unit within the AAR Western Region,⁴⁷ and Viale was president of the region from 2016-2017, but this was a one-year term (American Academy of Religion Western Region, n.d.). Granted, while this reference may be an error caused by simply copying-and-pasting Viale’s biography each year, this reference also engenders a particular impression among attendees. Discussing larger fields, Frickel and Gross note that recruitment and success depends on participants’ capacity “to depict themselves as caught up in some grand sweep of intellectual history” (2005, 223). Connecting the CCPS with the AAR attempts to tie this event to the larger intellectual

47. Due to its size, the AAR is subdivided into ten different regions (American Academy of Religion, n.d.a.), with each region hosting an annual meeting. Larger regions also have program units, guaranteeing sessions devoted to that topic at a regional meeting. However, there is no relationship between regional and national units on the same topic.

movement of Pagan studies. The average attendee is likely unaware of differences between the AAR, its regions, and national versus regional program units. However, conversations among participants reveal that attendees are certainly aware of the AAR, and that this association has a section devoted to Pagan studies. Reference to Viale currently being a president within the AAR enhance the academic legitimacy of the CCPS, and its position within Pagan studies, reinforcing that this conference is suitably academic and connected to more traditional academic spaces.

Scholars within the broader realm of Pagan studies are aware of the CCPS, but some express concern over the event's academic legitimacy. Hale argues that this event is not "as academic as it needs to be, to call itself an academic conference."⁴⁸ One concern that Hale cites is the inappropriate blending of devotional activity within an academic conference. From my own observations, in 2019, the conference's first day concluded with a ritual. Similarly, while there was no scheduled ritual in 2020, one attendee led an impromptu ritual to begin the second day, and another ceremony at the end of the day to close this magical space. Seamlessly interweaving the religious and academic creates concerns over the event's ability to call itself suitably academic.

Hale adds that this event is representative of a broader trend, whereby Pagans co-opt terms like academic and scholarly. Pagans often use these terms when certain conventions (citations) or a particular voice (attempting to denote authority and/or objectivity) are present.⁴⁹ One can purport to be speaking (or writing) from an objective or academic perspective, and thereby strengthen what is really an apologetic or normative claim.

Hale suggests that the conference is not problematic because of its performance, but rather how the performance is framed, adding, "you can call yourself something else, but it's not

48. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

49. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

an academic conference.”⁵⁰ As a practitioner, Hale acknowledges, “I really enjoy the topics, the discussion and the community that the conference has nurtured over the years,” but notes, “they need to fix their relationship with academic discourses.”⁵¹ In other words, Pagans meeting to discuss shared issues is uncontroversial. Indeed, there are Pagan conferences throughout North America that bring members of this community together. However, positioning this particular event as academic is misleading and raises concerns.

Many presentations are also emblematic of a broader issue, namely, the problematic use of “we” in Pagan studies (Pasi 2010, 391). Presenters use “we” interchangeably to refer to scholars and the Pagan community, “suggesting that Pagan Studies scholars, readers and the subject population are integrated” (Hale 2013, 156). In 2019, for example, Lilith Pearson announced that without good leaders, “our community” will cease to exist. Joseph Futerman stated that although monotheism brings a sense of comfort, “we all chose to reject this safety.” This event presumes that all those interested in the field will necessarily be Pagans.⁵²

Similarly, explaining how this event differs from others, Albaugh notes that “since most of us are polytheists,” the 5-minute, 1-minute, and “time is up” warning cards common at conferences are replaced by faces of Aphrodite, Hermes and Medusa. Despite amusing explanations corresponding to each figure’s mythology, their use (and how they are introduced) reveals a broader trend that marks this conference. Although there is some acknowledgement of important contributions from traditional Pagan studies scholars, mainstream academia is often

50. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

51. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 2, 2019.

52. Hale offers similar criticisms of the Pagan studies unit in the AAR’s Western region, which is co-chaired by Albaugh and Viale. Referencing a 2014 call for papers, Hale notes that of all units, “Pagan Studies was the only call that used ‘we’ consistently, and framed the call with an assumption that the papers would be from Pagans for delivery to Pagans” (2013, 157). Criticizing this call’s “overly activist and theological” language, Hale suggests that this regional unit further exemplifies scholarly venues being subverted to promote normative theological discourse.

referenced in a slightly demeaning manner. Attendees often complain about the high prices or unwelcoming nature of academic journals and conferences. Several presenters announce that their talks will differ from typical academic presentations. Revealing tension between Pagan communities and Pagan studies, this framing asserts that this event is *also* academic, but somehow different, more friendly, and in important ways (to Pagans), *better*.

The CCPS and Pagan Legitimacy

Bolstered by the aura of academic legitimacy that this event and its organizers construct, many presentations provide internal legitimacy for Pagans. Many speakers do not analyze Paganism, but rather, assert normative claims of what is best for the community. Pearson, for instance, criticizes older Pagan leaders for taking advantage of the vulnerable, and calls other leaders inexperienced (2019). Rather than analyze challenges to leadership in this decentralized religion or theorize why issues arise, Pearson lists complaints about Pagan leadership, describes her preferences, and asserts formal leadership structures as desirable.

Sam Webster began his presentation by criticizing the inadequate training that Cherry Hill Seminary offers, arguing instead that Pagan ministers need more knowledge about Christian theology and Western religious history (2019b).⁵³ Webster argues that more training (perhaps the MDiv and PhD he lists in his program biography) is desirable for all Pagan leaders. Rather than analyze instances when leaders revealed their insufficient training, Webster uses broad claims – “we teach priestcraft, but too frequently it is thin” – to criticize one institution and legitimize certain credentials as a more desirable standard (2019c). Webster further complains, “many people can declare themselves Pagan even if they have never met the culture we have been

53. Since Webster made this paper available online, cited references will be to this online version.

building for 600 years.” Failing to account for Pagans who might consider their traditions much newer (or older) than the 600 years he arbitrarily suggests, Webster here attempts to assert, and thereby legitimize, Paganism’s ancient lineage.

Discussing a controversial female-only PantheaCon ritual that was denounced as transphobic, Gus diZerega’s presentation was particularly normative, challenging the idea that “a trans woman is a woman,” and asserting, “natal women’s lives are more subject to impact of embodiment” (2019a).⁵⁴ Rather than analyze the complex dynamics surrounding transgender participation in Paganism, diZerega mostly asserts his own perspective on how this issue should rightly be understood. He argues, for instance, “attacking natal women who want to limit certain rituals . . . is deeply destructive to the Pagan community,” adding that PantheaCon “has been deeply injured by efforts to compel an arbitrary standard” (2019b, 27). The above presentations are merely representative of many others. Although framed as scholarly, such presentations offer no academic contributions, and simply use the academic impression surrounding this event to legitimize or validate moral positions or perspectives.

How Practitioners Engage with the Conference

Pagans primarily participate in this event as presenters. Delivering a presentation offers a platform to share stories from one’s practice and assert one’s religious beliefs. Pagans (presenters included) also engage as audience members. Whether nodding in agreement or raising comments and questions during the discussion period, attendees can also validate their personal beliefs. Although debates over such issues as leadership or trans inclusion already happen within Pagan communities, offering Pagans other opportunities to assert one’s views, discussions at this event

54. diZerega also posted his presentation online. Subsequent references will be to this online version.

are elevated because of how the conference is framed. Distinguishing the conference as a more dignified and intellectual space, attendees frequently reference vitriolic arguments that happen online or in their own communities. Attendees often add that they value this event because it allows space for critical or academic discussions. Positioning these conversations — which are often simply extensions of intra-community debates — as though they are critical or objective analyses thereby elevates the discussion itself and legitimizes the specific perspectives that get reinforced.

Blogs further illuminate how the broader Pagan community positions and understands this event. Demonstrating the venue's power to immediately signify and legitimize the conference as academic, many articles introduce the setting in the opening lines (Kraig 2013; Wolff 2013). Macha NightMare describes the event as striking a balance between the AAR — of which Pagan Studies is “only a small part” — and PantheaCon — “which draws a general Pagan public, [and] features a small number of scholarly presentations” (2016). By referencing these other events and noting this balance, NightMare supports the desired performance that organizers of the CCPS seek to strike, appealing to a broad Pagan audience while situating itself as suitably academic.

Many blogs also emphasize the scholars who participate. William Blumberg, for instance, describes the keynote speakers “along with about 30 scholars from a wide range of disciplines” (2012). Despite acknowledging earlier that presenters include both practitioners and scholars, Blumberg applies the label of scholar to all presenters. Donald Michael Kraig similarly notes, “although anyone could attend, the presenters . . . were primarily university professors and students” (2013). Analyzing the 2013 event's roster highlights how such comments manufacture

legitimacy.⁵⁵ Although usually around one third of presenters are professional scholars, blogs suggest that presenters are all or predominantly scholars. Further reinforcing the academic nature of the event, Kraig writes, “The professors and students will go back to their universities and colleges (accredited ones) and teach their classes . . . with what was presented at the conference in their minds.” Kraig references these academic backgrounds (and the “accredited” schools where they teach) to suggest that the conference’s influence and impact will thereby spread even further than the fifty to seventy people in attendance. Failing to properly contextualize the identities of presenters (to say nothing of the perspectives of some presentations), such statements construct this event as an entirely scholarly gathering, and disseminate this impression to readers.

Commenting on articles allow Pagans who did not even attend the conference to still engage with the event.⁵⁶ Patrick Wolff’s article describing the 2013 event focused on the keynote speakers, meaning most comments referenced either Peter Dybing’s presentation or Magliocco’s, titled “The Rise of Pagan Fundamentalism.”⁵⁷ Several commenters criticized Magliocco’s suggestion (as summarized by Wolff) that some Pagans restrict membership to those sharing a set of core beliefs. One commenter going by the name “Kauko” writes, it is “convenient that the ones who are fundamentalists are the ones who advocate a different opinion than the one throwing the term around.” Questioning whether any groups are actually excluding people,

55. Presenters representing scholarly backgrounds (who hold PhDs, publish through academic outlets, and teach at universities) included Sabina Magliocco, Kimberly Kimer, and Zayn Kassam. An equal number of presenters, including Lauren Raine, Armando Marino, and Macha NightMare, neither hold advanced degrees nor do they research or teach. Several presenters, including Sam Webster, Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, and Joseph Nichter, have more ambiguous identities, as some hold advanced degrees, but are not employed as researchers.

56. All quotes in this section, unless otherwise noted, come from the comments section of Wolff (2013). In addition to this being a comprehensive report on the event, it generated over seventy comments, well above the average interaction for *The Wild Hunt*, a Pagan news site.

57. Organizers note that each year they attempt to have one keynote speaker representing academia, and another representing Pagan communities. Since Magliocco represented that year’s academic keynote, I solely analyze reactions to her presentation.

Kauko adds, “I can’t say I’ve personally heard of any.” Positioning their anecdotal observations as equivalent to Magliocco’s research, this user claims to have never witnessed what Magliocco describes. Elsewhere, Kauko also disputes Magliocco’s classification of what even constitutes fundamentalism, noting, “I’ve heard individuals state that they only want to do rituals with other people who believe in literal gods . . . [but] I can’t say that I see that as fundamentalism.”

Other commenters discuss the relationship between Paganism and scholarship. “Cernowain Greenman,” another commenter, finds it “fitting” that Wiccans “embrace the learning that can come from scholars,” adding that if Pagans build their beliefs on scholarship, “then we also must be ready to change our beliefs when the majority of scholarship disprove those beliefs.” Another commenter, “Genexs,” mostly agrees with this suggestion, but advises critical reflection, adding, “Just because a certain academic says something should not make our belief systems melt and drip out our ears.” A third commenter, “David Griffin,” asserts even greater skepticism: “Let us recall that every academic writer has a bias and an agenda. The agenda in Prof. Magliocco’s presentation seems clear enough to me. To demonize anyone with roots in Pagan antiquity outside of Wicca . . . as ‘Fundamentalists.’” Griffin adds that Magliocco’s alleged bias “belongs more to . . . politics than to legitimate academic discourse.” Piling on further, a commenter named “Helmsman Of-Inepu” even challenges Magliocco’s credentials, writing, “If someone has academic aspirations, they should consider finding some ‘value-neutral’ terms instead of ‘pagan fundamentalism.’” Ignoring that Magliocco has arguably already achieved her academic aspirations, this commenter declares her conclusions biased and therefore inaccurate.

Posts about the conference in other years are not similarly disparaged. Indeed, the conference sometimes receives such praise as “I think it’s great that academics find our

movement worth studying” (McShee 2018). However, Magliocco’s presentation applied a label that some consider inappropriate or even offensive. Since few commenters even heard Magliocco’s presentation, only reading the brief summary that the *Wild Hunt* article offered, the title alone likely caused these negative reactions. Although Magliocco uses fundamentalism to categorize behaviours that she has observed in Paganism (and that other scholars have observed in other religions), some Pagans seem concerned by this term’s connotations. Suggesting that scholars instead adopt “value-neutral” terms illuminates how some Pagans believe scholars should write. Despite generally favourable reactions to this conference in other years, feedback becomes especially hostile when scholars do not offer affirming, positive portrayals of Paganism.

The desires of many actors shape this conference. When trying to justify itself to CGU as an official university event, the conference must presumably emphasize its traditional scholarly format or the number of presenters with advanced degrees. In-person however, when most attendees are Pagans (and many are not scholars), the conference ingratiates itself to this audience in various ways. This includes a more casual atmosphere, the prevailing use of “we” in presentations and conversation, and in many presentations, promoting certain normative claims. Online, when there is even less engagement with the content of presentations, scholars that do not explicitly affirm positive portrayals of Paganism are criticized. How this event continues to develop in future years will likely be shaped by the various actors and desires with stakes in the conference.

Pagan And Polytheist Educational Research Symposium

Since 2016, Mystic South “focuses on mystical, magical, and spiritual practices of the South,” through workshops and presentations (Mystic South, n.d.a.). Unlike many Pagan events

that happen outdoors, organizers wanted a more formal space, settling on an Atlanta-area conference centre.⁵⁸ The Pagan and Polytheist Educational Research Symposium (PAPERS) represents Mystic South's "academic track," providing "high quality, original research" about Paganism (Mystic South, n.d.b.). Describing the inspiration behind PAPERS, Director Ryan Denison explains, "my vision was to try to bridge the gap between academia and the practitioner."⁵⁹ Throughout our conversation, Denison emphasized research and "methodologies" as elements that separate PAPERS from other Pagan conferences. However, Denison also aims to distinguish PAPERS from academic events. He explains, "You go to academic conferences and they're geared towards academics ... there's not a lot of interaction with people that aren't in the circle, that may not have the vocabulary."⁶⁰ PAPERS seeks to address the inaccessibility of academic conferences by opening the door to practitioners and creating a more welcoming environment.

Although much younger than CCPS, PAPERS offers a similar number of presentations per year. In its first year, PAPERS offered sixteen presentations, whittled down from twenty-five submissions received.⁶¹ PAPERS also resembles the CCPS in its review process. While Denison adjudicates proposals by himself (as opposed to both Albaugh and Viale), the process seems no less intensive or discerning. Describing what he looks for, Denison lists "an academic methodology...or at least some sort of standard of research."⁶² He rejects proposals that lack an understanding of "exactly what an academic paper might look like."⁶³ Describing the CCPS's

58. Mystic South also differs from other events by catering to the Southeastern US, unlike larger Pagan conferences which happen in California or the Midwest.

59. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

60. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

61. The next year offered slightly fewer presentations, but this was partly because Denison rejected more submissions that did not meet his standards (Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019).

62. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

63. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

criteria, Albaugh lists such questions as “are they on topic? Are they cogent? ... Do they have something compelling to say?”⁶⁴ Granted, while this criteria differs from more traditional academic spaces,⁶⁵ both PAPERS and the CCPS hold similar standards. More importantly, they consider their standards to mirror academic ones. Albaugh suggests, “I would say that we’re probably as rigorous, believe this or not, as AAR.”⁶⁶ Regardless of whether they appropriately screen academic research, organizers purporting to impose certain standards helps position these spaces as academic.

Attendees’ descriptions also help legitimize PAPERS as academic. John Beckett writes, “About 450 people gathered . . . for three days of workshops, rituals, scholarly presentations, and the kind of deep Pagan conversations you just can’t have in most places” (2019). Heron Michelle writes, “The PAPERS presentations from an Academic perspective elevate our thinking” (2018). Laura Perry notes, “this is something we need much more of in the Pagan community” (2019). Attendees support PAPERS’s academic legitimacy through descriptions of deep, critical, scholarly presentations. In turn, PAPERS facilitates internal legitimation by re-assuring Pagans that their religion possesses a more intellectual outlook.

As a relative newcomer, PAPERS has not yet attracted any major scholars, nor has it generated the same buzz online as the CCPS.⁶⁷ Heather Greene, who is involved with Mystic South, suggests that PAPERS is still experiencing some growing pains, suggesting, “the academics don’t necessarily trust that it’s legitimate enough,” but adds that Denison is “working

64. Jeffrey Albaugh, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2019.

65. The CPSPU, for example, looks for “things that have a solid thesis, that are theoretically sound, and engaging with some form of wider scholarship”(Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019). Further, AAR proposals are evaluated blindly by a larger team of reviewers.

66. Jeffrey Albaugh, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2019.

67. In addition to this event being fairly new, another possibility for the lack of online buzz is due to the fact that it is located in Atlanta, while higher populations of Pagans (and Pagan studies scholars) live on the West Coast.

hard to build its reputation.”⁶⁸ While PAPERS still has some ground to cover to become accepted by Pagans and scholars, this event still provides legitimacy in the same ways as other para-academic conferences. Pagans can position their beliefs as scholarly presentations, thereby legitimizing personal claims. Attendees can engage with scholarship about Paganism that they might not otherwise encounter. Finally, hearing claims from academic presenters reinforces the idea that one’s religious outlook is supported by research.

Cherry Hill Seminary Symposia

A final event bridging academia and Paganism is a series of symposia co-sponsored by Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS) and the University of South Carolina.⁶⁹ Since 2013, these symposia happen every three years, centering on a theme related to Paganism. This collaboration emerged after several Pagans took a class with one USC professor, and decided to join forces and hold a conference uniting scholars, Pagans, activist-practitioners, and people around campus.⁷⁰

Traditional academia is strongly represented at symposia, which are official USC events. Past presenters include Ronald Hutton, Bron Taylor, and Michael F. Strmiska. Additionally, each symposium produces an edited volume (Griffin 2014; Leader 2017; Emore and Leader 2020), giving this relatively small conference permanence and wider distribution. A bridge to Paganism comes through an open invitation for anyone to attend and/or present. Co-sponsorship with CHS further reinforces involvement from the Pagan community, and students earn “intensive credit” toward their degrees by participating (Cherry Hill Seminary, n.d.g.).

68. Heather Greene, interview with Chris Miller, November 15, 2019.

69. Unlike the other conferences discussed in this chapter, this event goes by a different name each year. To avoid confusion, I call this event simply “the symposium.”

70. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 25, 2019.

The most recent conference topic was “Paganism and Its Discontents,” exploring racism in Heathenry. Describing the content of some presentations, Emore suggests, “we watched some Heathen participants ... kind of dance around the issue.”⁷¹ Through this topic, organizers sought to address a major issue in the Pagan community. Through presentations, speakers were able to carefully manage the impression of this community (often downplaying the prominence of racist perspectives). Describing her co-organizer’s comments at the event’s closing, Emore shares, “he was really firm with them, and he said, ‘you’ve got to get in front of this.’ And you can’t do it by saying ‘well they’re not Heathens.’ He said, ‘people can call themselves whatever they want to. But you can get out front and say what Heathen values are.’”⁷² Prompting practitioners to assert normative definitions of Heathen values reveals yet another way in which the event can legitimize particular outlooks. In addition to fostering an exploration of racism in Heathenry, this event also offered a public relations opportunity for non- or anti-racist Heathens. Encouraging practitioners to define Heathen values as anti-racist (which admittedly, might be an important internal process for this religious community) helps protect the legitimacy of this community, and potentially, protect the legitimacy of studying this community.

Compared to other events discussed in this chapter, it is harder to identify the symposium’s importance to Paganism. While the event attracts prominent scholars, symposia also run infrequently. With eight to ten presentations every three years, symposia do not actually promote that much research about Paganism and fail to represent a significant form of institutionalization for Pagan studies. Potential contributions to Paganism are also limited by their intentionally broad focus. The most recent event distinctly focused on Pagan issues. However, the first symposium – “Sacred Landscapes” – integrated Native American

71. Holli Emore, interview with Chris Miller, April 9, 2019.

72. Holli Emore, interview with Chris Miller, April 9, 2019.

perspectives, while the 2016 event – “The Greening of Religions” – discussed environmentalism from Pagan, Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist perspectives.⁷³ While these events reveal a demand among Pagans to engage with research, and despite individual presentations potentially reinforcing certain positions, infrequency decreases this event’s impact on both Paganism and Pagan studies.

Para-Academic Legitimacy

These three events all straddle academic and religious worlds, encouraging wide participation while simultaneously emphasizing an academic nature. Promoting an impression of profound or objective (coded as scholarly or academic) discourse distinguishes these events from practitioner-driven conferences. Professional scholars who attend and present help support the academic nature of these events. The CCPS and the CHS symposia also strengthen their academic legitimacy through their settings. Emore acknowledges, “I was happy to ride the coattails of the university’s name.”⁷⁴ A university setting lets those without academic credentials declare their participation in an academic conference, thereby elevating their perspectives as more objective or scientific. Even PAPERS (hosted in a hotel conference centre), reflects conscious decisions from organizers to promote a more professional impression. Unlike Pagan gatherings that happen outdoors, Denison notes, “we wanted to put on one that was more formal. More geared towards academics.”⁷⁵ Using performative elements as resources, these conferences legitimize the perspectives promoted therein.

73. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 25, 2019.

74. Holli Emore, interview with Chris Miller, April 9, 2019.

75. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 12, 2019.

The para-academic nature of such events raises opportunities and concerns for Pagan studies. These conferences encourage scholars to speak to, with, and as Pagans, helping to convince Pagans that this field accurately and appropriately studies Paganism. Such events are also incubators for the field. Viale suggests that her event “gives [people] a place to do their research and to get feedback from peers who have a sense of what they’re talking about.”⁷⁶ Albaugh adds, “I tell people, ‘if you’ve never presented before, this is a great conference for your first presentation.’ You know, accepting crowd, not critical.”⁷⁷ Situated between academic and Pagan events, these conferences help amateur scholars and students who are entering academia improve their research and confidence.⁷⁸ Such conferences may even represent “recruiting centres” for Pagan studies (Frickel and Gross 2005), convincing curious persons that this is a viable field. Obviously, these spaces are weaker recruitment spaces than the AAR due to lack of prestige. However, these are places where young scholars are encouraged to further pursue research about Pagans, and where non-academic Pagans encounter scholarship about their community. Indeed, professional scholars have presented research at these conference which would not be out of place at the AAR’s (or any other organization’s) annual meeting. Especially for emergent academic fields which lack many formal venues for scholarship, non-traditional spaces hold value as incubation centres or bridges to more traditional academic settings. In these ways, relatively low-stakes conferences offer useful tools for legitimation for the field of Pagan studies itself. They provide more spaces to present research, gather feedback on research-in-

76. Dorothea Kahena Viale, interview with Chris Miller, March 9, 2019.

77. Jeffrey Albaugh, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2019.

78. Organizers also help people prepare for traditional academic spaces by offering resources for writing proposals and delivering papers (n.d.c.; n.d.d.). Further, presenters from the 2019 and 2020 CCPS presented similar research at AAR regional and national conferences in 2020. This admittedly small sample demonstrates that for some, para-academic conferences offer stepping stones towards more traditional academic spaces.

progress (before it is published, or presented at larger conferences), and to engage and build relationships with the community being studied.

However, the questionable academic legitimacy of these events also raises concerns for Pagan studies. Despite the high-quality or suitably academic presentations which occasionally take place, many who present papers simply mask normative claims behind an academic façade. Pagans can legitimize their beliefs as ‘objective’ or ‘scientific’ by emphasizing the academic nature of such spaces. Regardless of whether the claims that one makes are based on scholarly research, the impression of scholarship curated by these events helps to validate the perspectives therein as authoritative. By subverting scholarship’s traditional purposes, these spaces could weaken perceptions of Pagan studies.

When pondering why it is easy to have presentations accepted at religious studies conferences, Albaugh suggests, “I mean if it was an anthropological conference or physics or something like that, yeah, a whole ‘nother ball game ... but since it’s *religion*, I think some of the strictures are loosened on that.”⁷⁹ Although Pagan studies has primarily sought to situate itself within religious studies (as opposed to other fields or disciplines), most scholars cite other reasons (beyond looser restrictions) for this placement. Highlighting interdisciplinarity, for example, Clifton shares, “the beauty of religious studies is that you can use all these different things. You can use folklore, or you can use textual criticism. You could use psychology of religion, you can use literature. It’s a real big tent, and I like that.”⁸⁰ Selena Fox targeted religious studies (and the AAR specifically) for a Pagan studies unit because it represented a conservative,

79. Jeffrey Albaugh, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2019.

80. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

prestigious institution.⁸¹ An especially tight vetting process would contribute to legitimizing and building bridges of understanding for the movement and field.

Despite these more common explanations, Albaugh suggests that religious studies possesses a bonus in terms of its flexibility, or perhaps an intertwined relationship with theology. These differences reveal ongoing tensions over what academic spaces are supposed to be, and reasons why para-academic conferences are potentially concerning for the broader field. Declaring religious studies to be looser lets the CCPS legitimize more normative or reflexive presentations as being suitably academic. Recalling Hale's criticisms, while there is no issue with a forum that allows Pagans to gather and discuss common issues, framing such events as an academic conference is worrisome. Albaugh's claim might concern those who consider religious and Pagan studies to be as critical or scientific of an endeavour as an anthropology conference. This and other conference's claims to fly under the banner of Pagan studies, while holding different standards for what constitutes scholarship, can potentially weaken the broader credibility of this field. From this perspective then, para-academic conferences might be a more useful tool of legitimation for Paganism itself, rather than supporting the field. These events offer spaces where particular claims about Paganism can be asserted, while also being elevated by some markers of scholarship.

Indirectly Getting Your Foot in the Door

This chapter explored two different indirect ways by which Pagan studies develops a presence in academia. Both courses and para-academic conferences function to legitimize Paganism and Pagan studies. Courses that explore Paganism – over an entire semester or in a

81. Selena Fox, interview with Chris Miller, December 10, 2019.

single week – legitimize the field by giving Pagan studies scholars courses that they are qualified to teach, and spreading research about Paganism to wider audiences. Courses that attract high enrollments further help this field entrench itself as a valid subject of inquiry. Courses also offer external legitimation for Pagan communities, by promoting awareness of Pagans, destigmatizing misperceptions, and asserting the legitimacy of this religion. Finally, courses offer internal legitimation for scholars who teach or students who take such courses. Positioning Paganism as a feminist religion, one that values the environment, or one with ancient roots promotes a particular affirmative perception of Paganism. This impression is validated through the authority of a university classroom.

I situate courses as a less direct means of entering academia because at present, there are no concerted or unified efforts to develop a more formal or comprehensive Pagan studies curriculum. While there are indeed many courses which touch on Paganism, marking the growth of Pagan studies in academia, there is also tremendous disparity concerning what courses are called and what topics they cover. This creates disjointed impressions over who Pagans are and what exactly Pagan studies does. Perhaps posing the greatest challenge to institutionalization are those scholars who were told that Paganism is an entirely unacceptable topic to integrate into their courses.

Para-academic conferences are another less direct means of institutionalization since these events primarily legitimize Pagan communities, rather than Pagan studies. Although some events offer stepping stones to more legitimate academic spaces, most presentations help to legitimize emic claims. However, regardless of their content, conferences can be described as academic spaces. Stories of different events (and the perspectives promoted therein) spread

through the internet or word-of-mouth, making Paganism and its scholarly study seem more significant.

Chapter 6 – What Gives You the Rite? Insiders and Outsiders in Pagan Studies

The insider/outsider issue is an ongoing debate concerning the question, “is it appropriate if someone belongs to the community that they study?” Identity shapes prior knowledge and access to communities, leading to considerable reflection on this issue in anthropology, sociology, and other fields. Although present in many fields (Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Herndon, 1993; Hurley and Jackson 2020; Milligan 2016), this debate is especially prominent in religious studies (Cabezón and Davaney 2004; Chryssides and Gregg 2019; Driscoll and Miller 2019; Knott 2010; McCutcheon 1999). Since this field explores “that which is most dear and precious to people,” Hughes notes, “there exists the dangerous assumption that only those who have had the same kind of ‘inner experiences’ are uniquely qualified to study and write about the religion in question” (2013, 19). Ivakhiv notes that issues of scholarly positioning are especially acute in Pagan studies since many scholars are insiders and much research draws on such methods as auto-ethnography (2015, 201). Further, some claim there can be no outsiders in Pagan rituals (Salomonsen 2004; Wallis 2004), posing potentially irreconcilable obstacles for outsiders.

Despite a rich history of this debate across many fields, this chapter focuses on how scholars in Pagan studies confront the issue. Although positions on this issue are informed and influenced by broader disciplines, explicit incidents of the debate offer a lens into broader questions concerning how practitioners are meant to interact with the study of their community. Following a general sketch of the debate in Pagan studies, this chapter explores two case studies which outline the function that the insider/outsider debate serves in this branch of scholarship. Tanya M. Luhrmann reveals how expectations placed on outsiders potentially limit their involvement. Ronald Hutton's work demonstrates dual meanings of outsider in Pagan studies, describing non-Pagan scholars, but also Pagans who are interested observers. Analyzing how scholars in this field discuss identity reveals an assumption that some perspectives are considered more legitimate than others.

While outsiders are involved in fields like Islamic, Buddhist, or Jewish studies, many fields have a demographic imbalance in favour of insiders. Within religious studies, Reid shares, "studying inside your own tradition is very customary."¹ Reasons include insiders possessing greater depth of knowledge, passion for the subject, and connections with practitioners. That Pagan studies is a relatively small, and newly emergent field – indeed when mentioning my project to scholars in other fields, some were unaware that this field even exists – likely accentuates this demographic imbalance.²

Historically, the insider/outsider debate primarily affected insiders. The academy's colonialist history of white Europeans studying so-called primitive populations created an impression that outsiders are best suited as analysts. Insiders trying to study their own

1. Sían Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

2. As will be discussed scholars might also require initiations to gain access to this esoteric mystery religion, which further deters outsider participation in certain spaces. In contrast, insiders may already be initiated, making it easier to gain trust.

communities were often accused of being not thoroughly objective. Reflecting the belief that insider scholars are less critical (and such work is therefore inferior), or that some fields simply exist to appease insider students or scholars, prejudices against insiders can damage the perception of entire fields (Rooks 2006, 137). However, with insiders who study their own tradition becoming more of a norm in religious studies, the onus can also occasionally shift to outsiders, who must prove why they should be trusted as reliable knowledge producers. This describes the situation in Pagan studies. Many of the field's founding scholars were insiders, and this demography persisted over time. Further, no one has ever seriously questioned the ability of insiders to study Paganism. Kathryn Rountree writes, "ironically, given the academy's (former) tetchiness about researchers 'going native,' it appears that in some quarters of Pagan scholarship there has developed a reverse prejudice against scholars who *do not* identify as Pagan" (2015b, 161-2). This position renders Pagan studies anomalous, though not wholly unique, compared to other fields. Referencing Sikh studies, Darshan Singh suggests, "religion is an area which is not easily accessible to the outsider, foreigner or non-participant" (1991, 3). Phrases like "not easily accessible" flip the script, suggesting that while outsiders can (in principle) participate, it will be harder, and their analysis may never be as insightful compared to an insider. In Pagan studies, debates often revolve around how (not if) insiders can study Paganism, and questioning the capacity of outsiders to do so.

Granted, outsider scholars exist in Pagan studies. Albeit in small numbers, their existence is frequently corroborated in conversations with insiders, conversations with outsiders, and publications in the field. Whenever asked whether one must be a practising Pagan to engage in this area of study, scholars responded with a resounding no. Notably however, Calico prefaced

his answer, “*My answer may not be the most popular answer...but I definitely don’t think so.*”³ Although ironically this was the most popular answer, his apprehension reveals a tension surrounding outsiders. While the field generally welcomes participation from outsiders, some scholars share that spaces like the AAR can sometimes feel “like a close group of Pagans who are doing that work,” making it harder to feel accepted.⁴ Despite a professed openness to all perspectives, tension surrounding outsiders, and how these perspectives are policed, allows scholarship to legitimize certain perspectives.

Framing the Debate

To discuss the insider/outsider debate, this section briefly describes the perspectives framing this issue. The most obvious distinctions – pro-insider and pro-outsider – can be subdivided further. Arguments that: a) insiders are more trustworthy conductors of research, or b) outsiders are untrustworthy support the pro-insider perspective. Similar arguments support the pro-outsider perspective. Although scholars rarely maintain such dichotomous positions, these stark opposites establish an overarching spectrum.

Some argue that insider researchers “speak the same language” as interlocutors, creating better observations and analyses. York argues, “emics have some receptive advantages in terms of being able to understand perhaps more fully the implications of certain beliefs” (2013, 139). Building on Hadden and Evans-Pritchard, York adds that insiders have the advantage of speaking “a Pagan ‘language’” (139). Finally, York suggests that since studying religion requires understanding what is at the basis of a given belief, “academic emics are in the position to

3. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019.

4. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller.

facilitate an understanding” of Pagan beliefs, “and to bridge that understanding for an etic analysis” (142). Joanna Lipinska, an outsider who studies Paganism, notes that she faces such disadvantages as not knowing certain secrets associated with the tradition, and having trouble gaining access to communities.⁵ These factors offer insiders distinct advantages, making them more reliable messengers.

A common rebuttal to this argument is that scholars should not reproduce participants’ experiences verbatim, but interpret them using their discipline’s tools (Jensen 2011, 32-33). Zwissler argues, “our job is not just to describe or to quote. Part of what we can give back is the special perspective that anthropology gives us.”⁶ The tools that all scholars use to interpret their observations means that outsiders can overcome distance to analyze other’s experiences. Further, some argue that belonging is a disadvantage, since insiders might be too close to contextualize the big picture. Lipinska adds, “I can see some processes that [Pagans] may miss because they are inside it, and it’s so obvious for them.”⁷ More practically, Reid shares that because insiders “share so much understanding of the meaning of terms and the interpretation of situations and other things with the people they’re studying,” important information remains left unspoken, never appearing in transcripts or field notes.⁸ In contrast, outsiders will have to ask many questions, prompting specific answers and producing more concrete data.

Another (alleged) disadvantage of insiders is inability to be critical. Outsiders are more likely to critically interrogate beliefs that they do not hold (Orsi 2005, 150). Further, insiders may seek to protect or alter their community’s image. Reid writes, “frustration with not seeing myself reflected in the literature that purported to discuss ‘people like me’ . . . propelled me into

5. Joanna Lipinska, interview with Chris Miller, March 6, 2019.

6. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

7. Joanna Lipinska, interview with Chris Miller, March 6, 2019.

8. Sían Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

graduate school in an attempt to give myself the tools to frame the presentation of Neopaganism differently” (2001, 34). Research can promote certain images or combat stereotypes. While Paganism is not known for evangelizing, York adds, “we would like to see other people become Pagan, or understand their own paganism. So, there’s the inclination to try to promote something” rather than study it “objectively.”⁹ Joanna Lipinska explains, “most of the research, especially because it’s conducted mostly by Pagans themselves, is very positive. And sometimes I would even say it’s a bit biased because it’s conducted by Pagans.”¹⁰ Discussing why such omissions occur, she adds, “One thing is they might not see it. The other, because they are part of it, they might not want to write about it.”¹¹ Outsiders need not confront such conceptual hurdles, or be suspected of distorting research to legitimize their religion.

Another disadvantage for insiders is how research can affect one’s identity. Reid suggests that due to intellectual transformations during graduate school, it can be difficult to see rituals through the same lens as before (2001, 38-39). Andy Letcher similarly shares, “I came to doubt the existence of spirits, gods, the supernatural, and whether the wondrous otherworldly encounters related by my peers were nothing short of delusory” (2004, 33). Mundane factors like time constraints further limit one’s ability to be involved with Paganism after entering academia (33). Insiders can also lose their community if practitioners dislike their research. After reproving a “right-wing, militaristic takeover in Àsatrú,” Strmiska “found [himself] isolated and attacked in the online Àsatrú world,” adding, “I had become a pariah” (2012, 4). While insiders may engage with Paganism on levels that outsiders are unlikely (or unable) to access, a scholar’s

9. Michael York, interview with Chris Miller, November 29, 2019.

10. Joanna Lipinska, interview with Chris Miller, March 6, 2019.

11. Joanna Lipinska, interview with Chris Miller, March 6, 2019.

social and religious life is potentially threatened by their research. Critics may claim that a desire to protect beliefs or maintain friendships can distort research.

Re-Framing the Debate

Moving beyond the dichotomies outlined above, many scholars argue that emic-etic distinctions are no longer helpful to understanding positionality. One figure shares that scholars “used to talk about bracketing, trying to bracket our perspective, but I don’t know that anyone really takes that seriously anymore.”¹² Since people are more complex than a binary of insiders and outsiders allows, some reinterpret the distinction as a gradient (Jensen 2011, 42). This section highlights how Pagan studies helps to complicate the insider/outsider debate in the study of religion.

In Paganism, the population of insiders is quite diverse. A Druid studying a Gardnerian coven or a Heathen conducting a pan-Pagan survey are insiders in that (like their informants) they believe in multiple gods and celebrate seasonal cycles. However, both are also outsiders in that they worship different gods and perform different rituals. Paganism’s eclectic nature also supports people engaging with many different traditions, meaning a single practitioner might shift seamlessly between Wiccan, Heathen, Christian, and Buddhist practices and beliefs. This makes it tricky to even define what practices or beliefs are inside of Paganism.

Further complicating how Pagan identities are understood, many refuse to be reductively labelled. Fisk shares, “While I do not identify unequivocally as Pagan, any critique that this chapter makes is from a place of loose affinity, rather than of ‘otherness,’ even if that affinity does not extend to outright belonging” (2017, 23). This complicated dance of being both inside

12. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019.

and outside is common throughout the field. Some scholars do not identify as Pagan, but possess what are often called “Pagan sensibilities.” Even some outsiders suggest that they have been “influenced” by their involvement as a researcher, shaping their personal identity and spiritual practices, yet still not identifying as Pagan. Pike has had “transformative experiences” in Pagan communities, and celebrates seasonal cycles in ways that she learned from Pagan communities, but does not “label [herself] as a capital-p Pagan.”¹³ Especially in fluid religions such as Paganism, people constantly join and leave. Adding another layer to the complex identities of insiders, some scholars shared that while they were previously deeply involved in Paganism, they are no longer active practitioners.

Intersectionality further highlights how different aspects of identity (e.g., race, gender, sex) shape research (Crenshaw 1991). A white scholar might downplay (or perhaps not notice) racial insensitivity in a coven that a BIPOC scholar would highlight.¹⁴ People are also involved in religions to different degrees. Some scholars are deeply embedded in Paganism or are even Pagan authorities, perhaps leading a coven. Others merely embrace certain Pagan beliefs regarding the environment, and occasionally attend festivals. Degree of commitment also applies to outsiders. One may have been completely unaware of (and therefore ambivalent towards) Witchcraft before starting research. In contrast, someone that belongs to Heathens Against Hate¹⁵ is not only an outsider to the Asatru Folk Assembly, but actively opposes this community.

Further commitments which can shape research include whether one supports Pagan activism through their professional duties, in their personal lives, or not at all. Finally, there are

13. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

14. The same applies to issues of trans inclusion, or the heteronormative gender dynamics of some Pagan outlooks.

15. Heathens Against Hate is one of many groups which officially denounces racism, homophobia, and other exclusionary practices in Heathenry.

differences concerning how scholars relate to their research. Some scholars share that their life-long research questions are informed by (or at least connected to) questions that they explore in their religious lives.¹⁶ Others might research things that they consider interesting intellectual problems, without any deeper investment in these issues. While there is no issue with scholars being so closely connected to their research, this raises that people simply relate to their research in different ways. Scholars occupy various identities, making it insufficient to only discuss one's identity as Pagan or non-Pagan.

Despite the complex, multi-faceted identities that people possess, scholars in this area often fixate solely on religious affiliation. However, beyond the question of whether one is or is not a Pagan, scholars often complexify their insider-outsider identity, occupying different perspectives at different times. Answering the question of whether she is a Witch, Rountree uses the metaphor of a “hag” in the Middle Ages, a being who “sat on the *hag* – the fence – yet who participated in both worlds” (2015b, 158). Scholars can sit on the fence between academia and Paganism while still participating in both worlds. Similarly, Magliocco describes herself as someone “who walks between the worlds” – at times deeply enmeshed in Pagan communities, and at other times, analyzing Paganism (or other traditions) as a scholar.¹⁷ In this field, anthropologist Elisabeth Kirtsoglou's suggestion that ethnographers belong to a “third culture” (2004, 16-7) becomes particularly advantageous for insiders. To bypass critiques of insider bias, one can assert that they are not really, truly, or entirely a Pagan. Such scholars can also ingratiate themselves to Pagans (and occasionally, undermine outsiders), claiming to be at least partly Pagan. This ambiguity offers flexibility and power.

16. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

17. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

The insider/outsider debate occasionally serves a deeper function in Pagan studies. While there was a time in academia when distrust of insiders was rampant, this suspicion largely subsided by the late-twentieth century. I have never encountered outsiders who dismiss the insights of insiders on identity alone, nor have I come across publications that automatically delegitimize insider perspectives. However, scholars occasionally position insiders as a beleaguered perspective (Bado 2013; Harrington 2015). By misrepresenting the skepticism and scrutiny that insiders supposedly face, Pagans position insiders as a marginalized perspective, even while it actually merits greater respect and attention.

As a field rich in ethnography, considerable reflection on scholarly positionality seems natural. However, the insider/outsider issue, as a scholarly debate with a long history, also allows insiders to make space in Pagan studies for mere description, cloaking this work in a veneer of critical theory. Although reflexivity is undoubtedly important, Hale argues that it occasionally “seems as though there is more writing about the process of doing Pagan Studies than there are actually data led studies” (2013, 157-8). In other words, talking about positionality often stands in for analyzing data.

Offering a warning about such over-emphasis, Sam Gill writes, “it is a sure sign of the tenuousness and irrelevance of the field when this talk about the field becomes the principal topic of discussion, the main product of the field” (1994, 972). The edited volume *Researching Paganisms* (Blain, Ezzy, Harvey 2004) is one example of reflexivity overshadowing data. This volume offers important reflections from some major Pagan studies scholars on the relationships between researchers and communities. However, this book also highlights how much space self-reflection sometimes occupies. Strmiska’s review of the volume suggests that scholars should reign in such reflections, drawing comparisons to a version of *Das Kapital* in which Marx

laments the conditions of his writing space (2005b, 248). Strmiska cautions against “opening the door” to unchecked self-reflection, in which scholars merely “provide an autobiographical account” of an experience rather than critically analyzing one’s observations (248). Referencing the same volume, Hale asks, “is the reflexivity underpinning sound scholarly practice? Does it give us a richer understanding of the material, or does it reify agendas and identity concerns by clothing them in the application of a scholarly discourse?” (2013, 158).¹⁸ Contemplating positionality often dominates conversations, standing in for and replacing deeper analysis. Again, while the volume in question – as a reflection on researching Paganism – certainly merits some reflexivity, it is representative of a broader issue, in which discussing positionality becomes the only broader theory and method that Pagan studies scholars address. This emphasis can hurt the field’s perceived legitimacy. If Pagan studies is merely a field where scholars discuss the challenges of being a Pagan scholar (or the unique difficulties of studying Paganism), then it may cease to interest scholars in other fields.

Reflexivity may also allow emic assertions to masquerade as theory. Suggesting that Pagan rituals especially cannot be properly observed by outsiders (Salomonsen 2004; Wallis 2004), scholars can reify certain claims, such that Pagan rituals are more profound than those in other religions (Harvey 2012). Couching such statements as reflections on methodology, religious claims can appear scholarly. Finally, emic assertions can exclude outsider participants, gatekeeping who can conduct research. Suggesting that insiders have privileged access to certain spaces limits what outsider scholars can supposedly accomplish. As the following section explores, outsiders who are automatically delegitimized further limit what claims can be made about Paganism.

18. Outside of this volume, Hale adds that many scholars continue to push for sessions discussing methodology in Pagan studies within the AAR unit (Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019).

Perversion of the Witch's Craft: Tanya Luhrmann and the Ethics of Outsider Observers

While condemnations of outsiders rarely materialize in Pagan studies, certain caveats are commonly placed on outsider participation. Some suggest that outsiders should “just be completely up front” about their research,¹⁹ or remain “value neutral.”²⁰ These are typical suggestions for any field. However, criticism of one outsider – Tanya Luhrmann – reveals the expectation that scholars should always support insiders’ favoured interpretations. Doyle White argues that the negative reaction to her book reveals a chasm between Pagan studies and other fields (2016b, 189). While outsiders are welcomed, acceptance seems partly based on offering favourable or affirming analyses.

Luhrmann’s book *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* explored several Witchcraft and magical groups in and around London. To explain how modern, middle-class people come to believe things that non-practitioners would dismiss as irrational, Luhrmann proposes the concept of “interpretive drift,” or “the slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone’s manner of interpreting events as they become involved with a particular activity” (1989, 312). Through training, members understand experiences through a community’s framework, which implies that social contact with Pagans is equally influential as supernatural experiences.

The book is most widely known for the controversy it created.²¹ The most common criticisms are that Luhrmann portrayed Pagans unfavorably, was disingenuous in the initiation

19. Ryan Denison, interview with Chris Miller, December 12, 2019.

20. Michael York, interview with Chris Miller, November 29, 2019.

21. To be sure, Luhrmann’s work is not totally dismissed by scholars in this branch of study. Ezzy calls interpretive drift one of Pagan studies’ more important theoretical contributions to scholarship (2015, 76). However, such praise represents a minority compared to how most Pagan studies scholars view Luhrmann.

that she underwent, and broke oaths upon publication (Pearson 2001, 55). When I asked how outsiders should approach Paganism, scholars frequently mentioned Luhrmann in their response, often completely unprompted. Scholars also often discursively delegitimize Luhrmann. Nikki Bado references “Luhrmann’s study of *so-called* ‘interpretive drift’” (2013, 129, emphasis added). Another scholar likened her book to a “piece of trash.”

Some complaints about Luhrmann’s work are reasonable. Luhrmann describes her research question as seeking to understand how people come to accept “outlandish, apparently irrational beliefs” (7). She also suggests that magic offers practitioners “the opportunity to play” (13). One could potentially interpret such descriptions as dismissive. Further, although Luhrmann told interlocutors that she was conducting research, she adds, “I was rather relieved when people forgot what I had so carefully told them” (17) and avoided using questionnaires because they would reinforce her outsider status and compromise what she could learn. Despite these issues, most of her choices can be justified. Scholars often describe their subjects using etic terms, and continually drawing attention to how one does not belong would make fieldwork awkward and difficult. Rather than substantive evaluations of her work, most criticisms of Luhrmann reveal how Pagan scholars use the insider/outsider debate to police research.

Some may dislike Luhrmann because her book made future research difficult. When starting her fieldwork, Jo Pearson recalls, “I found Wiccans still feeling they could not trust anyone studying Wicca and was even asked by one priestess, ‘You’re not going to do another Tanya on us, are you?’” (2001, 55). Rabinovitch explains that her participants “needed to know that I was oathbound by the same damn oaths they were. Especially after Tanya Luhrmann.”²² Some scholars also criticize fairly trivial details of Luhrmann’s book. Pearson asserts, “Her study

22. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

is limited largely to one Wiccan coven in London . . . yet the subtitle . . . suggests a representative study of Wiccan magical practice in the whole of England” (2001, 53). However, many book titles reference larger contexts despite being based on case studies. Further, the subtitle does not even mention Wicca, making Pearson’s comment bizarre. Rather than deeper disagreements with the book’s content, these complaints seem partly motivated by how Luhrmann exacerbated some Pagans’ reluctance to work with scholars, or were influenced by negative feelings already held towards Luhrmann.

Some scholars also cite the betrayal that Pagans felt (even those who were not participants in her study) as a sign that Luhrmann was unethical. This assessment reflects an assumption that for scholarship to be good, it should resonate with the community in question. However, when outsider scholars publish research to which other communities have later objected, this does not immediately invalidate said research (see for example Rochford 1985).²³

Describing insider/outsider debates in Sikh studies, Kim Knott suggests that these debates extend beyond identity and often mask deeper contentious issues in a field (2010, 259). Luhrmann’s concept of interpretive drift and the role of socialization in Paganism disrupts emic assertions that Paganism is a religion without converts (Reid 2009). While many Pagans claim to “come home” to a religion to which they have always (subconsciously) belonged, interpretive drift suggests that beliefs and behaviours (even describing conversion as homecoming) are influenced by social relations. Critiquing Luhrmann’s approach allows scholars to invalidate this theory, thereby eliminating a challenge to emic claims.

23. ISKCON hoped that Rochford’s book “would sway public opinion in their favor” and “decrease criticism from anticultists” (Ashcraft 2018, 218). Although ISKCON may have been disappointed by the result, Rochford’s book remains one of the landmark studies of this community.

Focusing on Luhrmann's approach, Pike writes, "more clarity on her part about the nature of her ambiguous role as insider/outsider would have been helpful" (1996, 366). However, Luhrmann's position was hardly ambiguous. She stresses, "I am no witch, no wizard, though I have been initiated as though I were," adding, "I never have, and do not now 'believe' in magic" (1989, 18). Rountree similarly charges that Luhrmann's insistence on not being a Witch "seems overly preoccupied with reassuring an academic audience . . . in lieu of a more reflexive and less dichotomizing discussion of her position" (2015b, 161). Reading into what factors might have motivated Luhrmann's positionality, this comment reflects the field's insider dominance, and those scholars with ambiguous identities. While possessing "Pagan sensibilities," for instance, is a less dichotomizing identity that some scholars possess, Rountree's critique overlooks that Luhrmann may not be a Pagan, and only entered these communities to conduct research. Luhrmann's approach has precedents in how scholars study other communities. For example, in her book on the Unification Church, Eileen Barker writes, "it was known that I was not a Moonie. I never pretended that I was, or that I was likely to become one" (1984, 20).²⁴ The respected position of Barker in religious and NRM studies attests to the general acceptability of this approach. That one could spend so long studying Witches without adopting Pagan sensibilities seems to puzzle other scholars. However, one can indeed participate in rituals (and even undergo initiations) without adopting a Pagan identity. By expecting outsiders to become sympathetic toward Pagan perspectives, reactions to Luhrmann's fairly typical approach reveals assumptions in Pagan studies concerning the purpose or outcomes of research.

24. Barker's research question also mirrors Luhrmann's, asking why/how people "become a Moonie" (1).

Oath Breaking and Data Collection

Many critics suggest that Luhrmann was deceptive, and tried to hide her status as researcher. While scholars can remind participants that they only attend rituals to analyze them, continued presence makes researchers resemble everyone else in the environment. This is especially relevant for Luhrmann, who attended rituals clothed in the same robes as practitioners (65). Scholars use many techniques to emphasize their position as researchers. For instance, Reid used “formalized settings” for interviews and “the deliberately obtrusive presence of a tape recorder” (2001, 37). Calico also used formalized settings, and wrote field notes in a visible way, helping him be seen as someone who was analyzing events through a scholarly lens.²⁵ Berger writes, “it was important to me that everyone I met knew that I was an outsider; furthermore, I felt the need from time to time to remind them, as it would be easy for many to forget” (2015, 131). Deflating any accusations that Luhrmann was deceptive, she describes an in-depth conversation wherein her informants noted that despite many books about Pagans written by Pagans, there were few produced by outsiders. This group decided to invest in Luhrmann as a translator, and understood that she would share her observations with an academic audience.²⁶ Reinforcing that participants were fully aware of her positionality, Luhrmann also distributed her dissertation to informants before publishing her book.

The controversy over deception is exacerbated by the closed nature of some Pagan communities. In Pagan circles, “oath-breaking” is a more damning accusation beyond mere deception. Since Luhrmann gained access to certain knowledge by undergoing initiations, some allege that her book violated oaths associated with that process. Since critics who call Luhrmann

25. Jefferson Calico, interview with Chris Miller, December 20, 2019.

26. Tanya M. Luhrmann, interview with Chris Miller, October 14, 2019.

an oath breaker do not identify specific examples, and Luhrmann denies breaking any oaths, the entire charge is subject to hearsay and unlikely to be resolved. Rather than try to determine if Luhrmann violated oaths, I explore the boundary-maintaining work that this allegation performs.

Rabinovitch emphasizes her insider position (and specifically, taking oaths seriously) to elevate her work as more responsible than Luhrmann's. However, Rabinovitch shares that following her Master's thesis, Pagans have also accused her of violating oaths.²⁷ Even years later at a book launch, critics confronted Rabinovitch with this accusation. Making available everything she had ever written about Paganism and challenging any critics to identify where she had broken oaths, Rabinovitch shares that two men went through all of her literature and apologized, having found no such evidence.²⁸ This story first highlights challenges in specifying examples of oath-breaking. Although frankly, it seems unlikely these men could actually read all of Rabinovitch's work in one evening, their failure to produce *any* evidence highlights that oath-breaking requires no substantiation. This pair presumably heard from other Pagans that Rabinovitch was an oath-breaker, and this was enough to convince them that she was unethical.²⁹ Representing a way to police perspectives in research, such allegations offer a convenient complaint to dismiss research that one may dislike for other reasons.

Although Luhrmann's outsider identity is rarely specified as a shortcoming, being an insider often becomes advantageous. Pearson writes, "I have myself crossed the same boundary as Luhrmann, but with one difference: my initiation into Wicca was not part of an intellectual process related to my doctoral research, but rather it was a genuine initiation into a religion in

27. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

28. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

29. While these men apologized after that evening, and said they would share what they learned, this was also not the last time that Rabinovitch was accused of violating oaths. Reflecting "front-end/back-end disproportionality" in news reporting (Wright 1997, 107), allegations receive more attention than their retraction.

which I had been personally involved” (2001, 56). Starting her PhD twelve months after her initiation, Pearson adds, “I have instead come from inside my field of research to employ an insider/outsider position which would allow me to study Wicca as scientifically as possible on a foundation of thorough knowledge” (57). Pearson uses Luhrmann to elevate her initiation as genuine and her subsequent conclusions as more scientific.³⁰ Summarizing how Pearson situates her positionality, Knott writes, “Pearson suggests that, whatever its difficulties, the both/and position of the insider-scholar is productive, the reflexive nature of its stance giving it the edge over outsider scholarship” (2010, 269). The favourable edge that insiders supposedly possess encapsulates an implicit insider preference in Pagan studies. While outsiders are welcome, insider perspectives are more thorough and scientific.

Adding layers to positionality, one scholar questions Pearson’s length of involvement. Describing her initial reaction to Pearson’s critique, they share, “oh god, the gall. She’s only had a year and a half and she’s writing these academic texts.”³¹ When I asked if one year was insufficient time to speak about Paganism, or insufficient time to speak about Paganism as an insider, they explained that their statement applied to both. They clarify, “now I probably wouldn’t say that,” suggesting this was their reaction at the time, as a Pagan who had themselves only recently entered academia.³² Although this scholar’s opinion of outsiders has softened over time, their initial reaction reveals the common expectation of a certain requisite amount of time immersed in the field before writing. Despite claims that outsiders can participate, questioning one’s time of involvement – and suggesting that a year is barely sufficient – limits outsider participation.

30. While Pearson declares herself an ‘insider/outsider,’ it is also unclear to what exactly she is an ‘outsider.’ Suggesting a more complex identity elides that she is simply an ‘insider.’

31. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, November 23, 2019.

32. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, November 23, 2019.

Some criticize Luhrmann for lack of involvement, suggesting that a scholar who also belongs to that community has more thorough or scientific insights. Conversely, some criticize her for becoming involved, only to leave abruptly. Explaining issues that she identifies in Luhrmann's approach, Emore explains, "she came in ... and she spent several years you know, gaining people's trust and supposedly becoming Wiccan...and then next thing they knew she was gone, and she published. They felt very betrayed."³³ Outsider scholars must seemingly walk the very fine line between becoming involved enough so that their research is considered thorough, but not too involved, lest they be accused of abandonment or deception.

Criticizing Luhrmann for leaving these communities after finishing her research raises the question of expected career trajectory. Clifton reflects, "a scholar who follows his or her interests is not going to necessarily stay within this little field all the time."³⁴ While some scholars study a single religion throughout their career, others bounce between topics, shaping time spent studying a particular tradition. Practical considerations also shape length of involvement. Jenny Butler sought initiation into a Druidic grove to conduct research for a book chapter. She contacted various groups she would potentially study and shares that one group which insisted on her spending a "year and a day" before initiation would be impractical for that project.³⁵ Scholars work on a range of projects, some of which have tighter deadlines or require less depth. This does not mean that such projects are necessarily less insightful or ethical, but such projects do restrict involvement with a community.

Judith Fox notes that since many NRMs are "distrustful of outsiders . . . in-depth participant observation is the best – and sometimes the only – way of gaining access" (2010,

33. Hollie Emore, interview with Chris Miller, April 9, 2019.

34. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

35. Jenny Butler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019. In Paganism, a year and a day is a common amount of time to spend studying a tradition before undergoing an initiation to a higher degree of membership.

348). For certain projects, depth of involvement helps develop trust and understanding. However, prolonged involvement need not require continued involvement (especially after a project's completion). Emore's comments about Luhrmann ignore that some scholars eventually move on to other projects. Relatedly, criticism of Pearson reveals that lack of involvement can also be wielded against outsiders. Outsiders may always be vulnerable to criticism – either insufficient time, or deceit and then abandonment – allowing Pagans to discredit outsiders.

To confront the issue of studying Paganism as an outsider, scholars have turned to such methods as digital ethnographies and surveys (Cowan 2005; Berger 2019). Pike's study of Pagan festivals offers other considerations for outsiders navigating fieldwork (2001). Pike studied festivals partly because no initiatory rites are required to experience full participation in such events.³⁶ Despite these different ways that outsiders can study Paganism, initiation was deemed methodologically significant for Luhrmann's research. Further, while she received permission to undergo these initiations (as a researcher, not a believer), harsh evaluations from scholars reveal an unclear terrain for outsiders in Pagan studies.

While outsiders who employ surveys, digital ethnography, or participant-observation at public gatherings are generally considered acceptable, Luhrmann being accused of ethical transgressions reveals that Pagan studies seems open to outsiders researching certain topics (or via certain methods) while restricting outsider access to other spaces. This offers a degree of openness, but imposes key limitations. Describing folktales of witch's flying ointments, Clifton writes, "the important thing is not the content of the secret, but the fact that one or one's group has secrets, and that other people know it" (2019, 240). Scholars enhance the prestige of Paganism's esotericism by upholding restrictions on participation. Pearson suggests that genuine

36. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

initiations offer more scientific insights, implying that what outsiders can learn about Paganism is limited. Whether certain knowledge is only truly accessible through initiation (or whether one must sincerely believe to undergo that initiation), is immaterial. Insisting that initiation is the only legitimate way to access Pagan knowledge – and that Luhrmann’s initiation was illegitimate – upholds the secrecy that confers prestige on Pagan practices.

Luhrmann demonstrates that outsiders can research communities to which one does not belong, and even undergo initiations. Outside of Pagan studies, scholars research various traditions by becoming close to certain groups, but never joining (Wallis 1977; Barker 1978; Richardson et al., 1978). Such work is generally accepted as ethically and methodologically sound. In Pagan studies however, criticisms of Luhrmann mark her work as illegitimate, thereby implying that her assessment of interpretive drift is inaccurate and that outsiders cannot study the full range of experiences in Paganism.

Hutton v. Whitmore: The Triumph, Trials, and Tribulations of the Moon

Complicating the traditional insider/outsider debate in this field are the many Pagans interested in research. Many scholars share that their journey into academia began after becoming Pagan, and reading academic texts in various fields. Some scholars call this “going native in reverse;” first joining Paganism, and then becoming a scholar (Pearson 2001; Harrington 2015). Even when Pagans are not involved in Pagan studies, many have graduate degrees, or even work as professors in other fields (Berger, Leach, and Shaffer 2003, 32-3; Berger 2019, 30-2). Finally, even Pagans who are not “formally academics,” are still described as “academically-minded.”³⁷ Many Pagans position their religion as being informed by an

37. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

intellectual approach. Wiccans and Heathens especially describe themselves as “the religion with homework.”

One particular topic that interests Pagans is history. Theories from history, archaeology, and folklore are often used as evidence that validates the beliefs and practices of Pagans as old, authentic, and therefore legitimate. However, since academic interpretations periodically change, this creates tension over the sources or ideas on which Pagans draw. Despite a general interest in research, Clifton describes an “attraction-repulsion” relationship that Pagans have with academia, adding, “they like it when the scholars make them feel good. They don’t like it when the scholars come in and try to complicate everything.”³⁸ For instance, Margaret Murray’s witch-cult theory (asserting that the victims of Europe’s witch trials represented a single, organized religion) was adopted by Pagans like Gerald Gardner, who positioned their traditions as continuing an ancient lineage. While the “Murrayite Thesis” and work of other scholars previously legitimized Pagan claims, this “supportive scholarly interpretation” disappeared by the 1970s (Tully 2011, 100). Although Pagans still largely value academic research, there is tension between “revisionists” and “counter-revisionists,” who dispute the proper or correct interpretation of history (Hutton 2011a).

In 1999, Ronald Hutton published *Triumph of the Moon*, which analyzes trends across British history that shape contemporary Paganism. Hutton’s ultimate conclusion – Gardner’s presentation of Wicca was a modern phenomenon, and not the “genuine survival of ancient religion” (2019b, 214) – upset those who see traces in history as proof of Paganism’s ancient roots and current legitimacy. While Hutton does not critique Paganism’s legitimacy, and while his book had a mostly positive reception among Pagans, some interpreted the book as attacking

38. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

their identity. When scholarship disrupts a narrative that underpins some Pagans' beliefs, a desire to reduce dissonance creates intense reactions, often through negative reviews of Hutton's book on message boards. The most formal response to Hutton came from Ben Whitmore, who produced a self-published book titled *Trials of the Moon* (2010). Whitmore focuses on minute errors that he identifies in Hutton's book, hoping to discredit his reputation and conclusions. Whitmore's book assumes the trappings of scholarship (i.e., footnotes and chapters) to position his conclusions as suitably academic and on par with Hutton. Despite scholars noting that Whitmore's critique is not actually on firm scholarly ground (Hutton 2011b; Kraemer 2011), Whitmore finds a receptive audience among Pagans because he offers reality maintenance. One review of Whitmore's book states, "If you are in the Craft, please read this book, do not take Hutton's title as the final word" (Menocchio 2017). Other reviewers similarly highlight how much they disliked Hutton's book, and explain why Whitmore's critique is so valuable. Whitmore offers Pagans 'research' that confirms their beliefs, thereby restoring an interpretation of reality that Hutton momentarily challenged.

This section uses the debate surrounding Ronald Hutton's *Triumph of the Moon* to explore scholar-practitioner relations. Not only were some Pagans upset by Hutton's conclusions regarding Wicca's ancient origins, but some even asserted that they could produce research that refuted his claim, and was equally academic and legitimate. This one debate is representative of para-academic conferences, self-published research, and blogs that position themselves as academic, which demonstrate Pagan interest in following (and sometimes joining) scholarly conversations.³⁹ Reactions against Hutton offer a lens to explore these broader tensions more deeply.

39. Calico similarly observes "growing interest among Heathens in obtaining academic credentials in Norse-related fields" (2018, 141). Although many do not enter Pagan studies (opting instead for fields like history or

I explore these reactions using the framework of the insider/outsider debate since such disputes revolve around who is qualified to make claims about this religion. Christine Hoff Kraemer writes, “Among amateur witchcraft scholars, there is often an implication that practitioner status makes one better qualified . . . than being trained as a scholar” (2011, 3-4). In contrast, professional scholars assert that practitioners are thoroughly unequipped for academic discourse. Describing tensions between scholars and Pagans, Hale explains, “There is still a lot of anger towards academics among some Pagans, especially when [scholars] want to assert our own space and professional language and conventions and [Pagans] feel their perspectives and work is denied access.”⁴⁰ Both scholars and non-scholars produce knowledge about Pagans. As will be discussed, Pagans consider their conclusions to be suitably academic, and scholars consider their research to be useful to Pagan beliefs and practices. These two parties competing for whose claims are most legitimate causes disputes over which perspectives or ideas should be given space, attention, and respect.

Reactions also reveal different ideas regarding the stakes of scholarship. Kraemer writes, “scholarship is theory supported by evidence, not scripture, and it should not be treated as such” (2011, 7). However, some Pagans do indeed approach scholarship like scripture, creating tense disputes whenever scholarship conflicts with one’s religious beliefs. Referencing another amateur Pagan scholar, Donald Frew, Kraemer writes, “rather than taking debates seriously as intellectual disagreements, Frew frames them as thinly veiled battles over matters of faith” (2011, 4). For some, research is not an intellectual exercise, but a way to reinforce and maintain reality. In the opening pages of his book, Whitmore describes meeting two practitioners who had

folklore), this trend supports that Pagan communities have great awareness of (and reverence towards) scholarly discourse.

40. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

abandoned Paganism because Hutton’s book “had convinced them they were living a lie” (2010, 3). Whitmore sees his response as a way to restore faith to those that Hutton “disenfranchised” (3). Discussing what motivates negative reactions to Hutton, Clifton writes, “if you’re just interested in having your narrative reinforced, then you may feel antagonism towards the scholars who aren’t reinforcing it.”⁴¹ While Pagans generally support research that offers reality maintenance, there are strong reactions against work that challenges self-perceptions.

The Debate Goes Viral

It is neither surprising nor unique that religious communities would criticize academic books. I highlight the debate surrounding Hutton’s book because it is more rare that scholars actually respond to such criticism. Tully brings this debate into the realm of scholarship in a 2011 *Pomegranate* article, calling the reaction to Hutton’s book an “internet smear campaign” against him (100). Kraemer also brings this debate into scholarship, describing “problematic Pagan attitudes about scholarship” (2011, 2). These debates (both the conversations online, and the more formal essays from Tully and Kraemer) reveal how Pagan studies scholars become active participants in these conversations. While similar debates played out across various blogs, I specifically analyze comments on a post from Clifton’s blog. Since this debate centred on Hutton’s book (a landmark in Pagan studies), and featured comments from several scholars and practitioners, this one incident sheds light on broader interactions between scholars and Pagans.

In the initial post, Clifton cited Whitmore’s book as evidence of amateurs writing poorly about Pagan topics (2010). One commenter who goes by “Apuleius Platonius” countered Clifton’s accusation, suggesting that practitioners have as much to contribute as scholars when it

41. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

comes to understanding history.⁴² This commenter adds that Don Frew (a “non-academician”) convinced Hutton to re-think his stance on several points he had overlooked in *Triumph*. Although Clifton dismissed this claim, Platonicus frames the crux of the debate, namely, in the eyes of Pagans, amateurs make worthwhile contributions to understanding Paganism’s history, and scholars are sometimes fallible.

Rather than immediately delegitimizing amateurs by asserting that professional scholars hold higher credentials, discursive strategies uphold the superiority of scholars in less abrasive ways. Tellingly, several scholars acknowledged that they had not read Whitmore’s book, but were still keen on offering criticisms. Having not read the book, such scholars are seemingly purely interested in whether or not a piece of research was produced by someone with a degree. However, they frame their criticisms by offering other reasons to dismiss Whitmore’s book. Pagan studies scholar Peg Aloï tells Whitmore, “the only way to present a truly substantive critique of a written work . . . [is understanding] the enormous amount of time and effort, not to mention expertise, that goes into such a work.” Professionals assert authority over amateurs through such factors as time and effort. Tully similarly writes, “an academic approach to researching any sort of topic is about in-depth investigation, arguing logically, and being clear as to how you came to your conclusions.” Although serving essentially the same function, these represent more polite criticisms than simply saying “this person does not have a degree.” When Whitmore points to his book’s “copious footnotes” and “bibliography spanning eight pages of quite small type” as proof of the time and effort he expended, Aloï introduces objectivity as another factor that separates professionals and amateurs. Suggesting that Whitmore fails to understand “the rigorous standards for scholarly writing which demand an objective approach to

42. All quoted material in this section, unless otherwise noted, comes from the Comments section of the post mentioned above (Clifton 2010).

historical sources,” Aloï positions scholars as objective, trustworthy, and unbiased, ideals which amateur historians lack. Although objectivity is a vague concept (and indeed, may not even be attainable), the term and others help scholars politely claim that Pagan studies is open to all, while still protecting the authority of professionals.

More acrimonious sentiments eventually surfaced as the debate continued. Aloï argues that Whitmore also fails to understand “what level of ability and accomplishment it takes for someone to progress to being named the Chair of the History Department at the second largest university in all of Great Britain.” While initial support for Hutton primarily highlighted intangible elements, Aloï here cites Hutton’s position to discredit Whitmore.⁴³ Addressing another commenter, Aloï weaponizes the term “independent scholar,” suggesting that it describes either a temporarily out-of-work academic, or “one who has never held a research, teaching or other professional position.” Independent scholar transforms into an attack on one’s intelligence or competence.

Antipathy between professionals and amateurs is apparently mutual. One commenter, Carla O’Harris, an amateur scholar who challenges the legitimacy of professionals, writes, “The reason Mr. Clifton seems to get behind elite history is obviously because he is a lackey of academia himself, who simply has no clue that there are independent scholars out there who can do spins around university-paid conformists.” Hutton’s book transforms from one publication into elite history.” Clifton and other scholars become lackeys of academia and university-paid conformists. In this case, institutional affiliation weakens one’s credibility, while independent scholars become the real experts when it comes to understanding Paganism.

43. Further, revealing how Aloï manufactures prestige, although Hutton holds a Chair at the University of Bristol, this is hardly the second-largest school in Britain.

Repairing the Divide

Reflecting on his disputes with Pagans, Hutton predicts potential futures for the study of Paganism. One possibility imagines that debates will produce a narrative history that is widely accepted by all parties. Another outcome envisions Paganism devolving into competing sects, each promoting scholars (or amateur writers) that reinforce preferred interpretations (2011b, 259). This outcome could potentially shape Paganism in the mold of Christianity – though on a much smaller scale – with groups promoting different intellectuals, publications, and even research hubs. Fearing a fractured future, Tully writes, “By casting aspersions on contemporary – and better – research, Pagans perpetuate the circulation of outdated scholarship and keep the public in thrall to false histories” (2011, 103). She suggests that to counter this, scholars should help Pagans understand research, by “decoding” scholarly findings (104). However, the Hutton-Whitmore episode demonstrates that while many Pagans embrace scholarship, some practitioners are clearly more interested in reality confirmation. Good research is whatever supports one’s beliefs. Anything that challenges this is elite history perpetuated by lackeys of academia. Responding to the professional scholars in this online debate, O’Harris writes, “What a tribe of ignorant fools. I am well familiar with academia, and then I am familiar with rigor . . . where I prefer the latter” (Clifton 2010). This practitioner specifically indicates that she dislikes academia. Similarly, the many Pagans leaving negative reviews of Hutton’s book complain that it is boring, obscure, or written simply to “impress other academics” (Aria 2013). Clearly, while some Pagans enjoy scholarly texts, others are simply uninterested.

Reflecting on Tully’s suggestions, it is unclear whether her concern is to reach those who despise academic elites, or compete with them. While Tully expresses concern that Pagans keep the public in thrall to false histories, it seems unlikely that the broader public trust bloggers more

than University professors (particularly someone like Hutton, who appears regularly on British television). Since disputed historical interpretations produce ruptures within Pagan communities, the public with which Tully is concerned are presumably fellow Pagans. However, if Pagans read Hutton and Whitmore, and decide to believe the latter, is this something that scholars must change? When scholars in other fields encounter communities with different beliefs or interpretations of history than themselves, they rarely try to change this position. Choosing to dismiss Hutton in favour of Whitmore might constitute interesting data that scholars can explore, but Tully does not explain why Pagans must accept Hutton's conclusions. Rather, she seems concerned with limiting who can make claims about Paganism.

When scholars enter these online debates, it is unclear whether their involvement is motivated by academic or personal interests. If they are interested as researchers, observing an intra-community debate, then it seems difficult to justify telling practitioners what beliefs are correct (or at least to repeatedly reinforce this point so forcefully). If they engage in such debates because it concerns their religious community, then scholarly credentials would seem irrelevant. A comment from Tully summarizes these conflicting perspectives: "academia is demanding and difficult. Religion – including Paganism – is an easy place to assert authority as you don't need to 'prove' anything" (Clifton 2010). Given these truly different worlds, what is the concern with Pagans disputing certain scholarly claims? In broader intra-community debates, Pagans emphasize their years of experience, or connections to elite members, to help prove their authority within Paganism (van Gulik 2019, 157-8). In this and similar debates, scholars also use their academic credentials (emphasizing their years of training, degrees, or possessing objectivity) to support their assertions. Being an elite Pagan and a scholar allows scholars to gatekeep authentic Pagan beliefs and practices.

It goes without saying that the scholars involved in this debate likely have a better understanding of Paganism's history than those amateurs with whom they were arguing. However, my discussion highlights another way that scholarship functions to legitimize a particular position. Discussing a broader issue she observes in the field, Hale explains, "a lot of Pagan studies [scholarship] has a problem with academic voice and insider voice."⁴⁴ Some scholars fail to properly distinguish from which perspective they are speaking or the audience they are addressing. The debates on which Tully and Kraemer comment occur through personal blogs or Whitmore's self-published book. However, offering their comments through *The Pomegranate* and AAR presentations, these scholars wield their position as insiders to academia to legitimize the interpretation that Pagan Witchcraft began in the 1950s. Granted, ample research supports this claim. However, not all Pagans accept this interpretation. Further, given the other unverifiable claims which underlie Paganism (or any other religion), it does not seem to matter whether Pagans accept this particular idea. Dismissing practitioners' beliefs simply because they fail to use academic inquiry ignores how scholars generally interact with communities that they study. Instead, asserting their academic credentials in these online debates helps scholars legitimize claims within their religious communities.

Identity and Constructing Boundaries

Due to the interested practitioners that Pagan studies attracts, the insider/outsider debate takes on multiple meanings. One can be inside or outside of Paganism, and one can be inside or outside of academia. Despite these labels' different meanings, Pagan studies still wrestles with the debate's traditional underlying question: who is qualified to produce knowledge? Concerning

44. Amy Hale, interview with Chris Miller, March 14, 2019.

identity, Magliocco reflects, “identity is always positional, and it’s always constructed. We construct our identities in the context in which we are presently.”⁴⁵ Scholars in this field play with different positions to construct identities, placing oneself in advantageous positions at various times. When debating Paganism’s origins with other Pagans, one’s scholarly identity can be used as leverage over those who lack similar qualifications. In other cases, when appraising another scholar’s work, identifying as a Pagan can elevate one’s perspectives as being more insightful.

Since research can destabilize or support religious perspectives, Pagans are invested in how scholars describe their beliefs, practices, and traditions. Many practitioners consider their beliefs to be based in legitimate, scientific, and historical research. Pagans not only pay attention to scholarship about their community, but also produce scholarship of their own, through conferences, blogs, and popular presses. When Pagans encounter claims in scholarship that contradict their self-perceptions, some respond through formal refutations or by questioning the expertise of scholars. Scholars who participate in these intra-community debates and draw on their credentials to reinforce particular positions reveal further ways in which scholarship can legitimize certain religious identities and challenge other interpretations.

Returning to the insider/outsider debate’s traditional manifestations, Pagan studies – like most other religious studies sub-fields – declares itself open to participation from all interested parties. Unlike some other fields, in which insiders see their objectivity or ability to conduct research questioned, the situation in Pagan studies is largely reversed. Since insider scholars can more easily access Pagan communities and are more likely to want to study Pagans, insiders

45. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 3, 2019.

dominate the field. While insiders are rarely (if ever) considered unfit to conduct research due to their identity, outsiders are often susceptible to scrutiny.

Many support this field's proclaimed openness through examples of outsider scholars. Berger, for example, is frequently cited as a non-Pagan who offers important contributions. Considering that Pagan studies is a small circle of scholars (and outsiders are relatively rare), the same names being repeated seems inevitable. However, the narrow range of examples also reveals that specific token outsiders are cherished for their ability to counteract accusations that this field is too practitioner-heavy (and therefore uncritical) (see for example Davidsen 2012). Clifton explains, "I think it's bad if everybody doing Pagan studies is a practitioner. Then you fall into the trap that Russ McCutcheon and Markus Davidsen are talking about, where you just sort of start taking care of your baby."⁴⁶ Suggesting that fields need outsiders, Clifton adds, "thank goodness for Helen [Berger], because she's a rigorous scholar."⁴⁷ Another outsider, Berry, suggests that the AAR's Pagan studies unit "kind of appreciate my clinical distance ... because they very often are, practicing Pagans. And I'm not. So, it adds a diversity of views and a way of understanding how the group can navigate."⁴⁸ The existence of outsiders offers evidence that both emic and etic perspectives are accepted and helps the field fit in with what is considered appropriate in academia.

While this academic community seems to treasure some outsiders, negative appraisals of certain outsiders highlights what specific qualities the field values. Berger notes, for example, that her first two books "gave a sympathetic analysis" of Paganism (2015, 131). Rather than Pagan studies being fully open to outsiders, scholars who are non-threatening or supportive of

46. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

47. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

48. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

Pagan perspectives are embraced. Berger adds that after publishing her sympathetic treatments, “most of the contemporary Pagans I met were somewhat less wary of me as a researcher” (131). Being accepted or trusted by Pagans can open doors for future fieldwork, revealing why scholars might adopt such a stance. In a cyclical fashion, support from Pagans leads to better access to communities, reinforcing more favourable or affirming portrayals of Paganism.

Relating to Communities

Debates surrounding the insider/outsider issue in Pagan studies also reveals underlying presumptions about the intended outcomes of research. A common refrain that scholars shared with me is that communities should benefit from research. This is also a common question that scholars must address in research ethics applications and an issue that some consider intrinsic to their work. As chair of her institution’s Institutional Review Board, Reece explains, “you should never have your population of participants where you are basically using them for your research. They should also receive some over-arching benefit.”⁴⁹ Although on the surface, this seems like a fairly innocuous stance, it involves moral evaluations of the groups that scholars study. Complicating Reece’s suggestion, Damon Berry (whose research intersects with hate groups) argues, “there’s a world of difference in applying that to marginalized groups that are benign in nature ... and groups that literally advocate genocide.”⁵⁰ Hate groups clearly offer a hyperbolic counterpoint to the claim that groups should benefit from research. It seems easy to mark such groups as a clear exception to the rule. However, Berry adds that beyond the obvious exceptions (groups which are clearly destructive), “then you’re being asked to make an ethical and moral

49. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, November 7, 2019.

50. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

distinction, and then forming your academic perspective around a sort of *a priori* moral judgement of the community.”⁵¹ Contending that groups should always benefit from being studied – unless they are somehow destructive – leaves tremendous grey areas in terms of which groups are good and which are bad. Further, the very idea of benefits is complex. A scholar studying a terrorist organization might suggest that the community benefits if their research develops strategies for de-radicalization and extricating people from these organizations. This could be construed as a benefit, but an informant may not see it that way. What is construed as a benefit reflects assumptions about whether a community is good and what represents a good outcome.

Outlining his criticisms of Luhrmann, Albaugh explains, “she’s got a chunk in her book that’s just like, did you even like these people?”⁵² Such criticisms are common, but reveal a leading assumption that Pagans are fundamentally good people, and therefore deserving of a particular (positive) treatment. Granted, as reflected in most conversations with scholars about their relationships with informants, many of the groups with which Pagan studies scholars spend their time tend to be friendly, welcoming, and express positive ideals. This understandably prompts latent assumptions about proper relationships to communities. However, these assumptions nonetheless reflect value judgements about the people involved. Many evaluations of Luhrmann ignore that scholars may not like the people that they study, scholars may not study good people, and not every community should benefit from research, or at least not in the way they think it should. Further, research is not necessarily deficient if the scholar did not like the community they studied, or if the community did not like the benefit or portrayal that derived from their study.

51. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

52. Jeffrey Albaugh, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2019.

Concerning another study, when Salomonsen presented her findings to the coven on which it was based, this group was dismayed by her conclusion that the community was “not as radical as they claimed to be” (Salomonsen 2004, 45-6). Following this reaction, Salomonsen re-evaluated her methodology for future research, employing what she calls a method of compassion. A potential benefit of her initial conclusion — that this community had simply replaced patriarchal Christian monotheism with the equally patriarchal Western Occultism — could be allowing this community to reflect on how they wish to enact more feminist perspectives. However, Salomonsen opted to revise her methods and produce conclusions that would resonate more closely with practitioners. Such an approach can lead to “methodological loyalism” (Davidsen 2012, 190), accepting how a community wants to be seen without further analysis.

Recall that Luhrmann’s concept of interpretive drift represents a challenge to emic assertions, particularly those surrounding the idea of homecoming in Paganism. Reid notes that Pagans themselves generally dislike the term conversion (2009). Similarly, Adler writes, “no one converts to Paganism” (2006, xii), while Harrington claims, “Wiccans do not convert, they come home” (2000). Interpretive drift offers a model for how conversion (albeit differently conceptualized) occurs within Paganism. Harrington critiques Luhrmann for overlooking the narrative of coming home that many insiders assert (2015, 186). That Luhrmann offers an alternative explanation to the homecoming narrative seems to motivate many negative assessments of her work. Analyzing reactions to her work, which often emphasize her outsider positionality, reveals that research which reinforces Pagans perceptions is accepted as the most legitimate.

Relating to Other Fields

Pagan studies serves as a microcosm of how fields debate identity. Looking to broader trends, the insider/outsider debate in Sikh studies parallels that in Pagan studies. Summarizing that field's opposing outlooks, Knott writes, "[Peter J.] Collins offers a postmodern response: the abandonment of dichotomous views of insider/outsider in favour of a more dynamic view in which everyone is a co-participant in the formulation of a narrative about religion" (2010, 270). Since scholarship should be open to all persons, and even insiders differ greatly from one another, Collins calls dichotomies useless. Scholars should look past identity, and accept that in academia many parties will construct knowledge about religion(s). Some of this knowledge may confirm practitioners' perceptions, and some will not. In contrast, "[Arvind-Pal Singh] Mandair favours the move to a study of religion (Sikhism) that 'is at once a form of self-discovery, no less spiritual than political, no less therapeutic than classificatory'" (270). Mirroring some Pagan studies figures, Mandair argues that the study of religion can become an outlet for religious discovery. Suggesting that religious studies become an avenue for spiritual discovery (thereby limiting the ability of outsiders to operate on equal footing) reveals a further way in which scholarship can legitimize the perspectives of communities.

Since this chapter focuses extensively on criticisms against Lurhmann, I must acknowledge that these are comments about a book that came out over thirty years ago. Further, many of the negative sentiments expressed towards Lurhmann in interviews came primarily from more senior scholars. Offering a more contemporary perspective on identity in this area, Damon Berry, who has entered this field more recently, suggests that his recruitment to the AAR's Pagan studies unit might be connected to his outsider status: "my affiliation with the Pagan studies group happened ... because of the way I approached things. Some people found that

appealing for how the group should be thinking as we go forward.”⁵³ That Berry was recruited because of his more critical distance (which the unit considered necessary to advance) reveals possible tensions between the old guard and new in Pagan studies. The transition between senior and more junior scholars (and their reactions to identity), is a future trend to observe.

53. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

Chapter 7 – What’s in a Name? The Power of Classification in Pagan Studies

Erich Goode writes, “Naming has political implications. By devising a linguistic category with specific connotations one is designing armaments for a battle; by having it accepted and used, one has scored a major victory” (1969, 89). Description, including the terms that scholars use to label and categorize their data, is a seemingly banal task that can reveal how people want a topic, idea, or group to be seen. Examining the so-called world religions, Masuzawa notes that trivializing this term as being “merely about language” avoids an important “critique of ideology” (2005, 30). Scholars use classifications to shape perceptions of communities. Matthew Bowman notes that Christianity, for instance, was redefined by white liberal Protestant (2018, 44), Catholic (104), and Black scholars (61) to legitimize different social positions as being fundamentally Christian. In Black studies, different titles (Africana, Diaspora, or African American studies) change the field’s scope and the relative importance of various identities (Rooks 2006, 167). Asian American studies faces similar debates over how groups including Pacific Islanders or Filipinos are often excluded (Kauanui 2005; Toribio 2005). Despite

beginning as women's studies (Arthur 2009a), a transformation to gender studies produces conflict over the position that men's perspectives and experiences ought to occupy in the broader field (Justad 2000). A field's title, and the labels used therein, reflect intra-community tensions and shape how communities are perceived.

Scholars have differing beliefs regarding what Pagan studies should be called, which communities it studies, or even what to call these communities. Recall that the AAR's Contemporary Pagan Studies Program Unit began as a proposed Nature Religions unit. These labels alter Paganism's scope and connects the study of Paganism to different discourses. Labels represent "academic forms of classification" (Bourdieu 1988, 197), which scholars enact through discourse. Doyle White pleads for a "rebranding" of Pagan studies, including "the explicit reformulation of its area of focus, [and] a concomitant name change" (2016b, 32).¹ Building on Doyle White's comments on this topic, this chapter explores how scholarly descriptors function to legitimize Paganism.

Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont write, "knowledge practices of individual disciplines . . . often change significantly from one time period to the next" (2011, 24). Due to new research, changing social trends, and other factors, old legitimation tactics become undesirable while new ones arise. These changes shape practitioners themselves and scholarly discourse as well. Describing one such shift within the last twenty years, van Gulik observes that Wiccans began "downsizing reconstructive efforts" and instead "*emphasising the efficacy of ritual and magic*" or "*shifting the attention to the ecological relevance of the religion*" (2019, 166). One cause for this shift were the many challenges to explanations that Pagans

1. He proposes "the 'academic study of contemporary Paganism'" as the most fitting title (56). While clarifying the field's purpose (study *of* Pagans, not studies *by* Pagans), it does not clarify who or what Pagans are. Further, this did not precipitate any terminological changes in the field's hubs.

previously adopted, including the Murrayite Thesis, Marija Gimbuta's research on goddess religions, and Gerald Gardner's claims of reviving an ancient lineage. When Paganism struggled to claim legitimacy by dint of being old, Pagans could emphasize the relevance of their environmental outlook.

Knowledge practices – in this case, labelling Paganism with different terms – constantly shift over time. Many parties, including professional scholars, popular writers within Paganism, and Pagans themselves, contribute to the knowledge practice of how Paganism is described at any particular moment. Describing the dynamic nature of social knowledge, Camic, Gross, and Lamont add, “knowledge institutions also contain a *dense multiplicity of knowledge-making practices even in the context of a single historical period*” (24). A specific label is never adopted by all Pagans, or by all scholars in the field. This chapter highlights different labels that have been used to legitimize certain outlooks on Paganism, though it is worth remembering that these are merely prominent trends that have arisen over time.

Paganism's vague borders allows the field of Pagan studies some flexibility to alter its scope. Through language, scholars can legitimize Pagans, linking Paganism to generally positive values, including feminism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, environmentalism, and tolerance. While Pagans broadly ascribe such values to their community, on-the-ground interactions complicate whether Paganism is inherently tolerant or whether Pagans are more environmentally conscious than members of other religions. There are obviously challenges in reducing any group to a core. Harvey compares Pagans to hedgehogs, since they constantly move and change over time (2015). Observations are inherently incomplete, since tomorrow Pagans may do something different, and what one saw may have been eccentric compared to most other Pagans (104). While Harvey notes that essentialized definitions result from limited space for description, or “a

carelessness about diversity and change” (104), scholars sometimes describe Paganism in particular ways to legitimize the tradition and its members. Through publication titles, proffered definitions, or selected foci of research, scholars may uphold or challenge Pagan self-perceptions and position their research in favourable ways.

This chapter explores three specific claims as case studies, illuminating general ways by which descriptions legitimize communities. I first explore scholars who used particular interpretations of statistics to imply importance and declared that Paganism is the “fastest-growing religion.” Following this, I explore Paganism’s relationship with the label New Religious Movement (NRM). This label allows Pagan studies to enter more spaces, but also potentially delegitimizes Paganism, leading to some scholars rejecting the term. Finally, I explore Paganism’s classification as an Indigenous religion. This categorization expands Paganism’s size, accentuates its marginality, and heightens demand for attention. However, appropriating Indigenous narratives to serve Paganism makes this label especially contentious.

Paganism by the Numbers

Perceived importance is often a matter of size. The world religions paradigm places considerable attention on Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Since this list also includes the largest religions, scholars of religion can defend this emphasis by claiming to study the most common manifestations of religion. That Paganism’s population is quite small poses a challenge to justifying the importance of studying Pagans. One way to overcome numeric deficit is emphasizing importance in specific contexts. For example, a Jewish studies scholar might note that while there are more Hindus globally, Jews are more numerous in America (Pew Research

Center 2015a). Similarly, since Pagans mostly live in America, Canada, Britain, and Australia, scholars in these contexts can justify studying a group with a smaller global population.

Emphasizing upward trends also helps justify importance. Rodney Stark suggested that due to rapid growth, Mormonism “stand[s] on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on earth since the Prophet Mohammed rode out of the desert” (1984, 19). Although numbers at the time were meagre, Stark suggested that Mormonism would soon become significant. Claims to be fastest growing are similarly asserted regarding Baha’i, Scientology (Lewis 2009b, 118-120), and even Pastafarianism (Polowy 2020). Unsurprisingly, practitioners often embrace these scholarly claims made about their group, since “impressive growth appears to *validate the truth* of one’s religion” (Lewis 2009b, 120). Reid L. Nelson writes, “many Latter-day Saints view Stark’s projections as long awaited, outside corroboration of their own beliefs regarding” their Church’s destiny (2005, 8). Growth claims can also enhance an academic field’s legitimacy. Highlighting the importance of Mormon studies, Stark notes that Mormonism’s growth “makes them the single most important case on the agenda of the social scientific study of religion” (1984, 16).

Around the early-to-mid 2000s, many scholars labelled Paganism the fastest growing religion in the West (Wallace 2004; Tejeda 2015); the US (Little 1995; Smoley 1998; Wallace 2004); Britain (Abdo 2009; Lovell 2019); or the world (Waldron and Waldron 2004; Waldron 2005).² This claim legitimizes Pagans by suggesting that while Paganism is not currently large, more and more people are recognizing the benefits of this religion. One scholar shares that Pagans occasionally come across such publications, and “point to it and say ‘see, we’re growing

2. Other scholars calling Paganism the fastest growing religion (without specifying a locale) include Gilliam (2012); Bakó and Hubbes (2011); Konold (2020); and diZerega (2014).

fast' or 'see, scholars take us seriously,'"³ demonstrating how the community interacts with such validating claims. Scholars can also use growth to imply that Pagan studies merits greater attention.

Mutant Statistics

Although this claim helps legitimize Paganism, there are reasons to interrogate its use. A claim to be the fastest growing invites comparisons. Paganism is not just growing quickly, but growing more quickly than Christianity, Islam, or any other religion. However, Joel Best suggests that such claims compare apples and oranges. While a new religion growing from 20 members to 200 represents a 1,000 percent increase (an impossible rate for many religions), Catholicism adding 200 more members "would not be a tremendous feat" (2012, 114). Vastly different scales of population make statistical comparisons misleading. Categorization also distorts comparisons. Referencing Canada's 1981 Census, Rabinovitch compares Pagan (2,295) and Quaker (2,810) populations, asking why Pagans are "treated with such ridicule" when a group with comparable numbers "is treated seriously?" (1992, 2). Outside of academia, a *Newsweek* article similarly suggests that Witches outnumber Presbyterians in America (Fearnow 2018). Despite comparable sizes, the category of Pagan broadly encompasses many traditions while Quakers and Presbyterians represent single denominations. Comparisons would change by comparing Quakers to just Gardnerian Wiccans.

Another issue with claims of growth is how scholars manipulate the data that they cite. Scholars who declare Paganism the fastest growing religion generally cite the American Religious Identification Survey, or ARIS for short (Strmiska 2005; Jensen and Thompson 2008;

3. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, April 16, 2019.

Oboler 2010; Sommerlad-Rogers 2013).⁴ In 1990, researchers estimated that there were 8,000 US Wiccans. In 2001, this grew to 134,000 Wiccans, 33,000 Druids, and 140,000 Pagans. Although this reveals a dramatic increase, the way that scholars describe these statistics manufacture legitimacy.

Strmiska writes, “an estimated 307,000 Americans identify their religious affiliation as ‘Wicca, Pagan, or Druid,’ making this one of the twenty largest religious categories in the United States” (2005, 1). He adds, “A similar survey carried out in 1990 did not even mention Wiccans, Pagans, or Druids, which underlines how fast modern Paganism” has grown (1). First, assuming that Strmiska is referencing the 1990 NSRI, Wicca was in fact listed in 1990, making his claim inaccurate.⁵ Further, although there is ample justification for the umbrella term Paganism, the label itself facilitates legitimation. While the original data lists these three groups separately, lumping them together offers a larger figure. Finally, Strmiska’s claim that Paganism is among the “twenty largest religions” fails to acknowledge that the ARIS data only reports twenty-one religions (counting both No Religion and Other Religion categories). It makes as much sense to say that Pagans are “one of the religions in America” as it does to call it “one of the twenty largest.” However, the latter claim connotes more significance.

Claims based on the ARIS data represent “mutant statistics,” or numbers that become divorced from their original meaning (Best 2012, 4). Scholars will more likely rely on Strmiska (or others) calling Paganism the “fastest growing religion” than track down the original data. Paganism being the fastest-growing religion became “what passes for knowledge” or “what

4. This study (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001) was conducted as a follow-up on the 1990 National Survey of Religious Identity or NSRI (Kosmin and Lachman 1991). Another follow-up was conducted in 2008 (Kosmin and Keysar 2009). To avoid confusion, I refer to each study as ‘the ARIS data’ and their corresponding year.

5. If Strmiska is referencing a different survey, he does not specify.

everybody knows” (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 3, 83). Mutant statistics become especially misleading through “number laundering” (Best 63). Scholars declare Paganism the fastest growing religion, and cite other articles that reference the ARIS data, but not the original data itself. Reinforcing how such knowledge becomes taken for granted, some scholars do not even cite data to support their claims of Paganism’s growth (Waldron 2005; Bakó and Hubbes 2011; DiZerega 2014). Routinely asserting a particular claim makes that suggestion immune to interrogation.

Mutant statistics also hide that Paganism was not necessarily the fastest growing religion. Best writes, “figures become harder to challenge because everyone has heard them, everyone assumes the numbers must be correct” (2012, 63). In this case, rather than specific figures, it was a specific claim that everyone had heard, and therefore everyone considered to be correct. Although no religion grew by a similar percentage from 1990 to 2001, the estimated number of Muslims grew by 577,000, Hindus grew by 539,000, and Pentecostalism grew by over one million members (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001, 11-12). These groups each added more members than there are Pagans. Failing to specify how scholars interpret statistics allows the idea of Paganism’s growth to go unchallenged. Number laundering is completed when scholars write, “the number of people identifying themselves as Wiccan or Pagan grew faster than any other” category in the ARIS survey (Jensen and Thompson 2008, 753). Although this claim is false, when others cite these scholars rather than the actual ARIS data (Fennell and Wildman-Hanlon 2017, 289), this cements Paganism’s unparalleled growth as what passes for knowledge. Through second-order interpretations, mutant statistics legitimize what practitioners and scholars feel about the community.

Calling something fastest growing further implies that a trend exists – and will continue – which in this case, is misleading. Various factors likely contributed to an apparent increase in Pagans. A spike in the 2001 ARIS numbers possibly resulted from some Pagans being coded as ‘Other unclassified’ in 1990.⁶ Suggesting that many did not recently become Pagans, but rather had the opportunity or confidence to self-identify, Cowan adds that “increase in disclosure” may not correspond with “increase in population” (2005, 195). While “minor pagans with Christian parents” are incorrectly categorized by censuses (Lewis 2007, 21), historical underrepresentation can also cause abrupt increases. In the late-1990s, many newcomers to Paganism were adolescents, inspired by the contemporaneous teen Witch craze (Berger and Ezzy 2007). As teen Pagans leave their parents’ homes, answer surveys themselves, and are no longer miscategorized, they appear as new growth.

Stigmatization also contributes to Pagans being historically undercounted (Crowley 2014, 491-4). However, larger trends in valuing diversity set in between 1990 to 2001. For instance, indicating “increased *positive recognition*” of difference, ethnic and religious categories on the Canadian Census greatly expanded between 1911 to 2001 (Beyer 2008, 15-16). Relatedly, the teen Witch craze not only attracted new Pagans, but made Paganism more acceptable, possibly helping Pagans feel comfortable disclosing identity. The years between 1990-2001 were also marked by more scholarship about and by Pagans. In 1990, Tanya Luhrmann’s book was the lone scholarly monograph about Paganism. If one believes the feelings of betrayal among Pagans that this book created (Pearson 2001), it may have increased hesitance to publicly self-identify. By 2001, considerably more research about and by Pagans had been published. Additionally, the

6. In 1990, all estimates below 4,000 were presumably lumped into the ‘Other unclassified’ category (Kosmin and Lachman 1991). Presuming that ‘Pagan’ and ‘Druid’ jumped from zero in 1990 to 140,000 and 33,000 respectively helps amplify the percentage of Pagan growth.

survey for the “Pagan Census” – with over 2,000 respondents – was conducted between 1993 and 1995 (Berger, Leach, and Shaffer 2003). Publications by – and interactions with – scholars may have helped Pagans feel more confident self-identifying to the sociologists conducting the ARIS poll.

Claims of Paganism’s growth also emphasized the ARIS numbers, ignoring other potentially useful data. Scholars suggested that the reported increase from 8,000 Wiccans to 307,000 Wiccans, Druids, and Pagans represents a “thirty-eight-fold increase” (Lewis 2007, 16). However, the unknown commodity of Druids or Pagans in 1990, and the low estimate of 8,000 Wiccans, helps accentuate growth. Other available data could better contextualize the size and recent growth of Paganism. For instance, in 1972, Marcello Truzzi estimated that there were 3,000 Pagans in the US (26). In 1985, Margot Adler estimated 50,000-100,000 Pagans (2006, 103). In 1992, Aidan Kelly estimated as many as 300,000 (141).⁷ Danny L. Jorgensen and Scott E. Russell provide a range of estimates over time (1999). In the 1970s, they suggested between 3,000-20,000 Pagans, rising to 40,000-100,000 by the mid-1980s, and at least 200,000 by 1999 (adding that 400,000 was not implausible) (326). Using just the ARIS data (which assumed there were only 8,000 Pagans in 1990), scholars suggested a 3,837% increase. Contextualizing a more realistic starting point produces a more gradual, realistic increase by 2001 and nullifies the possibility of calling Paganism the fastest growing religion. However, scholars who called Paganism the fastest growing religion not only ignored other data, but, in some cases, even failed to cite the data on which they were basing their claims. Since it legitimized Paganism in a particular way, the claim (and not the data) became central in Pagan studies research.

7. Granted, since Kelly’s estimate extrapolates from festival attendance, journal subscriptions, and the number of San Francisco covens, it should be scrutinized (Berger 2009, 153). While flawed, his estimate hints that there were likely many more than 8,000 Pagans in 1990.

Other Estimates

While the ARIS data was reasonably legitimate – although slightly overblown – other data for Paganism’s size and growth is much less reliable. This section briefly highlights these examples to further demonstrate how scholars manufacture significance. For example, discussing Pagan workplace discrimination, Manuel J. Tejada cites 2008 Pew data to suggest that “an estimated 13 million Americans identify” under the category Pagan and New Age (2015, 91). This is simply inaccurate.⁸ Tejada adds, “Mayer *et al.* [the researchers who conducted the ARIS survey] noted that Wiccans or Pagans were the fastest growing religious group” (91). Through careful phrasing, Tejada suggests that the original researchers called Pagans the fastest-growing religion. However, besides presenting estimates in a table, the ARIS report never notes anything about Paganism.⁹ Tejada attributes his interpretation – Pagans are fastest growing (by percentage) – to the original investigators to emphasize the importance of the phenomenon that he studies.

While Tejada’s 13 million Pagans likely results from a misplaced decimal, other scholars claim an absurdly high estimate of three million Pagans worldwide (Saunders 2012; Wilkins 2016; McClymont 2019; Lovell 2019) or in the US alone (Cyr 2019). Several sources are connected through a chain of number laundering, making it difficult to determine their origin. Wilkins, McClymont, and Lovell, for example, each cite Saunders, who cites a radio show in which the host offhandedly mentions an estimate of 1-3 million Pagans (Tippett 2008). This

8. According to the Pew Research Center data from that year, ‘New Age’ made up 0.4% of the US population or roughly 1.2 million people (2008).

9. Indeed, the ARIS summary actually suggests that those without any religious identification, evangelical Christians, and non-denominational Christians were the biggest gainers (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001, 10, 25).

chain reinforces how scholars establish certain figures as facts. Each scholar makes a claim about Paganism's size, and each provides a citation, but none offer statistical evidence.

When scholars do cite data to assert this estimate, this figure most often comes from the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (OCRT), which projected a rise to three million US Wiccans by 2018 (Robinson 2019b). Although scholars who cite the OCRT (Barner-Barry 2005; Yardley 2008; Cyr 2019) draw on a seemingly credible source, the metrics behind this estimate renders it suspect. In 2008, the OCRT extrapolated from the ARIS data to reach an estimate of 775,000 Wiccans (Robinson 2019a).¹⁰ To formulate this estimate, the OCRT first combines 342,000 Wiccan and 340,000 Pagan adults for a total of 682,000, then subtracts 170,000 based on “the number of Pagans who are not Wiccans” (Robinson 2019a). The OCRT then adds 90,000 for “Wiccans who refuse to disclose their religion,” before adding 173,000 teens to reach a total of 775,000 people. While each extrapolation has justifiable reasons, the arbitrary figures that they add or subtract have no justification. The OCRT's 2018 projection of three million Wiccans is even less credible, extrapolating from the increasing number of books on Amazon for “Wicca” (Robinson 2019b).¹¹

These flawed methodologies often matter less than the total reached. Best writes, “particularly when numbers reinforce our beliefs, prejudices, or interests . . . we take figures as facts, without subjecting them to criticism” (2012, 63). It is difficult to ever truly know how many people belong to this decentralized religion, and many scholars acknowledge that estimates will always be imprecise (Lewis 2007, 2012a; Yardley 2008; Berger 2009). Claiming that there

10. Notably, a more meager increase found in the 2008 ARIS survey (340,000 Pagans and 342,000 Wiccans) is rarely cited by other Pagan studies scholars.

11. Using book sales to discern population is unreliable for several reasons. Searching “Wicca 2011” for example, returns books that are irrelevant to Wicca, repeat items, and books that seek to protect readers from the dangers of Wicca. Finally, publications do not indicate that buyers or authors are Wiccan.

are three million Pagans worldwide “sounds about right,” and this claim is therefore rarely interrogated. The unknown nature of Paganism’s demographics is also sometimes used to enhance its size. Noting that Pagans are historically undercounted (Crowley 2014; Tejada 2015), scholars imply that Paganism’s true total might be even higher than the numbers provided by calculated estimates. Others rely on poorly-constructed estimates, such as the OCRT data, simply because this represents the best available figure. Finally, no matter the total number, scholars can use the possibility of future growth to assert that an upward trend exists.

Putting Numbers to Good Use

Scholars calling Paganism the next big thing legitimize this community and field of study. Statistics also prop up other legitimizing claims. Discussing Paganism’s rapid growth, Lewis raises the possibility of Paganism becoming “a large, mainstream religion within the next decade” (2007, 22). After noting that Pagans combined with Indigenous religions represents “between 5 and 6 percent of the world’s population,” Barbara Jane Davy concludes her book: “contemporary Paganism is no longer a new religious movement but a world religion” (2007, 217). Creative accounting, flexible labels, and the prospect of growth combine to elevate Paganism’s importance.

Finally, it is noteworthy that most scholars who cite this data lump only these three groups together. Other groups from the ARIS poll that could potentially be classified under the broader Pagan label include New Age (68,000 respondents) or Santeria (22,000). By claiming only 307,000 US Pagans (as opposed to 397,000, including New Age and Santeria estimates), scholars reveal the implicit boundaries of the Pagan category. As the next section explores, there are ongoing disputes over which traditions belong within Paganism. While New Age and Pagan

groups were previously grouped together (York 1995; Pike 2004), some dispute this categorization (Harrington 2007a). Similarly, despite major differences between Paganism and Indigenous or African diasporic religions (Doyle White 2016b; Gilmore 2018), some scholars assert wide definitions that combine these religions (York 2003; Davy 2007). That most scholars report exactly 307,000 Pagans as of 2001 reveals that statistics are hardly objective numbers. How scholars interpret numbers both reveals and reinforces particular constructions of who belongs to which groups.

Scholars calling Paganism the fastest-growing religion was especially pronounced in the mid-2000s; only a handful of scholars did so by the late-2010s. Most recent descriptions of size and growth are more nuanced. Aitamurto and Simpson write, “at the turn of the millennium, the number of self-declared Pagans and Witches was growing rapidly in virtually all areas with a population of European origin” (2016, 488). Helen Cornish writes that Pagan religions “have been growing in Britain since the 1950s” (2020, 414). Paganism is no longer the fastest growing religion, but one that is simply growing or growing rapidly. Growth is also limited to specific contexts. The decline of scholars pronouncing Paganism’s growth highlights that tactics of legitimacy rise and fall in popularity. Scholars proclaiming rapid growth was particularly prominent in the early 2000s, right as Pagan studies was establishing its first institutional hubs. After outlets were established, and this field’s existence seemed more secure, this claim of growth gradually disappeared. Reflecting that knowledge practices — or the labels that scholars use — change over time, the next section explores different trends in categorization.

Taxonomy

In Pagan studies, certain terms legitimize the community in specific ways, regardless of whether the community actually merits such a label. Different terms can expand Paganism's size, connect the community to certain allies, or relate it to various cultural concerns. Associating Paganism with environmentalism (Clifton 2004b, 2006) or feminism (Salomonsen 2002), for instance, helps connect Pagans to mainstream, generally positive, discourses. These associations also benefit scholars by allowing Pagan studies to enter new conversations and sub-fields.

When studying religions and settling on terms to use in research, how a community describes itself is an important consideration. However, preferred terms among Pagans is a complex issue. For example, while some practitioners use Witchcraft and Wicca interchangeably, others prefer Wicca over Witchcraft to help remove social stigma (Doyle White 2010, 195). In contrast, some prefer Witchcraft's countercultural associations, and see Wicca as being conflated with New Age "white magic" (201). M. Macha NightMare explains, "if you say a Wiccan, they think it's a little nature religion that's harmless, and if you say Witchcraft...that has some punch to it."¹² Finally, Zwissler shares that among feminist Witches, "some of them say, 'yeah, I'm Pagan,' and others don't really like that word."¹³ Terminological disputes between Wicca and Witchcraft highlight the complex politics behind classifying this broad movement. Further, while the above terms seem fairly similar, classification can get even messier when incorporating such groups as Druids or Heathens.

Rountree notes that Pagans consciously adopt labels "for strategic reasons as part of an identity project and expression of values," and to forge "a positive, empowering identity"

12. M. Macha NightMare, interview with Chris Miller, December 27, 2019.

13. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

(2017b, 4). Although tinkering with labels is something that Pagan communities already do, scholars participate in this process by reifying, legitimizing, or critiquing labels. Through *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* (updated from its earlier title, *A New Journal of Neopagan Thought*), the field helped to institutionalize a new designation. The AAR's Contemporary Pagan Studies unit also marked a shift from nature religions to Paganism. Titles alone, not to mention the content of research, shape how Pagans are described and categorized. Scholars represent one voice among many who shape trends in classification. While no single label has ever gained consensus – and it is unlikely that one ever will – this section explores two categories – NRM and Indigenous religions – discusses why these associations are proposed, and traces how terms perform legitimizing work.

The world religions paradigm constrains how scholars conceptualize their work. This list of roughly a dozen religions codifies what scholars consider to be the most significant (or perhaps most interesting to study) religions, helping break down data to fit more neatly into sub-fields, departments, and courses. Masuzawa notes that the maps, tables, and lists used in textbooks, for example, “lend immediate facticity to the subject matter through sheer repetition and proliferation,” thereby “endors[ing] as empirical and true what is in reality a particular way of conceptualizing the world” (2005, 6). However, divisions also reflect and reinforce ideologies concerning which religions are real, which are most important, or which manifestations of a given religion are the most authentic.

While scholars recognize that this paradigm reinforces Western imperialism, there is no consensus on alternative means to discuss or classify religion(s), explaining the persistence of “World Religions” or “Eastern Religions” courses across universities. Reflecting that academia responds to new knowledge through “additive solutions” (Gumport and Snyderman 2002, 376), a

common response is expanding the list. While the first (and smallest) conceptualization of the world religions included Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, expanded permutations include Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Recent additions include New Religious Movements and Indigenous religions. Contemporary Paganism's alignment with these categories help legitimize Pagans and Pagan studies.

A brief analysis of textbooks illuminates how these categories help Paganism enter the academy. World religions textbooks generally include chapters divided by tradition, ranging from Christianity and Islam to "Asian Religions" (see for example Amore, Hussain, and Oxtoby 2019). Textbooks first demonstrate malleability within the world religions. Some texts cover Zoroastrianism (cf. Brodd et al. 2018), but many others do not. Shinto occasionally receives its own chapter, but is sometimes subsumed under "East Asian Religions" (cf. Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis 2017). While introductory world religions textbooks rarely dedicate an entire chapter to, say, ISKCON or Lakota traditions, these gain representation through broader categories. In many textbooks, Pagans are represented in the NRM chapter, and in rare cases, the Indigenous religions chapter.¹⁴ Both labels therefore help Paganism secure representation among the world religions.

Paganism as New Religious Movement

Offering another example of how scholarly labels can legitimize groups, NRM is a term that was crafted by scholars "as a counter-measure to the pejorative associations" of the word

14. Location in textbooks is also significant. In most textbooks, NRMs are the last chapter. As the fourteenth chapter in a 500-page book, some intro courses may not even discuss NRMs. In contrast, Indigenous religions are foregrounded. This category offers the added bonus of guaranteed inclusion, foreshadowing why Pagans may eschew the NRM moniker in favour of being classified as Indigenous.

cult (Fox 2010, 340). Although introduced to destigmatize groups, the category has certain flaws. David Feltmate suggests that NRM studies employs a social problems paradigm, reducing all groups to their presumed deviance (2016). The term NRM also “began to accumulate many of the negative connotations previously ascribed to ‘cults’” (Fox 2010, 342). Lee Wiles suggests that by separating acceptable and unacceptable offshoots of larger religions, the term NRM reinforces power structures (2015, 18-9). Wiles adds that scholars use the category for groups that “do not have the approval of the dominant nodes of power” (18). Demonstrating the overlooked nature of the category, one scholar who teaches about NRMs shares, “I half-jokingly say things like ‘yeah I was brought on board...to clean up the leftovers in the department.’”¹⁵ Others question how people respond to the designation. Cowan and Bromley note that some people dispute whether the Church of Scientology is a religion while Transcendental Meditation practitioners contend that it is not a religion (2015, 5). Further issues are raised by asking how long a group can truly be considered “new” (4).

Despite critiques, the category can benefit scholars by bringing diverse groups together. This serves certain analytic purposes, but more practically, also enlarges the scope of one’s expertise. As noted in chapter 5, Paganism most often enters classrooms through NRM courses, while courses devoted to Pagans are rarer. Similarly, there is one Pagan studies journal, but several dedicated to NRMs. A scholar whose primary expertise concerns one specific new religion thereby receives broader applications and audiences for their work.¹⁶ Scholars also benefit from the category by appealing to students. NRMs often receive notoriety for stories involving instances (or accusations) of violence, sex, or brainwashing. While scholars may

15. Anonymous participant, interview with Chris Miller, June 25, 2019

16. As will be discussed, the term Indigenous religions similarly strengthens the representation of individual communities. While courses devoted to Anishinaabe traditions are rare, many more courses and textbooks combine First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

caution students that media conflates the behaviour of exceptional groups with the broader label, they offer such reminders to students who may have taken a course because they were intrigued by such controversies. The enrollment levels inspired by stereotypes helps scholars reach wider audiences.¹⁷ Finally, Ashcraft suggests that the term is retained – despite problems – because it carries “the history of the field of NRM studies” (2018, 4). Like the world religions, categories become entrenched through repeated use. However, as the following section explores, individual groups can detach themselves from this label.

Leaving NRM Studies

Due to a slightly earlier start, the fact that the term NRM encompasses a larger population, and the intriguing narratives which make some groups infamous, NRM studies is much larger than Pagan studies, with multiple journals, and even dedicated associations. Paganism typifies NRMs, not only in terms of having myths, beliefs, and practices that challenge the dominant culture (Cowan and Bromley 2015, 9), but simply as a group of traditions that emerged in the last century. As a result, early Pagan studies scholars often situated their research within NRM studies, presenting and publishing their work in that field’s traditional hubs (Ashcraft 2018, 221). Griffin notes that key figures in NRM studies supported her early research on Pagans (2015, 90). Many scholars also had institutional affiliations with NRM studies through AAR units or journal editorial boards.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, many scholars used terms like Neo-Pagan in their research (Magliocco 2004; Pike 2004b). This prefix signaled that Pagans were not confined to history, but

17. Masuzawa observes a similar trend in “Religions of Asia” courses. While scholars would theoretically refute that all religions in Asia have a shared essence, “this well-meaning yet uncritical assumption” consistently attracts high enrollments (2005, 9).

active in modern life. This prefix also further solidified the relationship between Paganism and other NRMs.¹⁸ However, scholars gradually abandoned the prefix “neo,” often replacing it with modern or contemporary Paganism. Zwissler explains, “there was building consensus that there was something kind of trivializing about putting the neo on it.”¹⁹ Reinforcing Paganism’s newness represents an extra label not applied to other religions. For Pagans claiming to preserve ancient practices, being called new may also challenge practitioners’ beliefs.

Some Pagans directly confronted scholars, voicing with their displeasure over the neo prefix or comparisons to other groups. Lurhmann describes a media interview she gave following the Heaven’s Gate controversy in 1997. Speaking about a recent event, Lurhmann drew on her expertise about one NRM (Paganism) to explain how people enter groups for rational reasons but, over time, do some things that outsiders consider irrational. Following this interview, Lurhmann explains, Pagans “became highly agitated ... Because rather than seeing this as a means of making sense of Heaven’s Gate, they experienced it as, I was saying that they were like Heaven’s Gate.”²⁰ Describing specific concerns with the neo prefix, Jenny Butler shares, “some American Druids email[ed] me who were irate that I’d used the term Neo-Pagan.”²¹ While Butler explained to these critics her reasons for using the term (and that she no longer does so), they were still irritated. Butler explains, “they think academics are trying to say, ‘this is not a real or authentic movement. It’s something new-fangled.”²² Trude Fonneland similarly shares, “the shamans I have interviewed reject the term neoshaman,” citing its “biased tone” and to

18. A further set of publications not only use the Neo-Pagan prefix, but studied Pagans alongside New Agers (York 1995; Heelas 1996; Bloch 1998).

19. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

20. Tanya M. Lurhmann, interview with Chris Miller, October 14, 2019.

21. Jenny Butler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

22. Jenny Butler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019. Relatedly, Butler adds, “equating Paganism with New Age, without critically analyzing how they’re the same and how they’re different” is another “problematic term for some Pagans.”

emphasize similarities “between their practices and those of ancient and indigenous cultures” (2018, 3). These responses demonstrate awareness among some Pagans concerning how scholars describe them and that Pagans especially dislike terms which they perceive as delegitimizing the movement.²³

Abandoning the term Neo-Pagan signaled a partial split between NRM and Pagan studies. While NRM studies (by definition) explores those religions which are new, many Pagan studies scholars consciously removed references to newness from their descriptions of Paganism. Distancing also occurred through establishing a separate AAR unit. Granted, the feeling that Pagan studies needed a space distinct from NRMs was partly mutual. Pike, former chair of the NRM unit remarks, “I remember making a pretty strong argument to somebody...[that] Pagan studies is kinda taking over the New Religious Movements group” through a disproportionate number of presentations.²⁴ That Pagan studies now fills three sessions of its own – as does the NRM unit – supports practical reasons for separation. However, there are also ideological motivations behind the change. As Clifton shared when re-launching *The Pomegranate*, this journal was to be a home for those scholars who felt “not completely at home” in the category of NRM studies (2004a, 7). Describing the importance of the Pagan studies AAR unit, Griffin suggests that this “signaled that Pagan studies as a formal area of study had not only arrived, it had matured beyond those lumped together under the rubric of new religious movements” (2015, 94). Griffin ascribes a maturation to Paganism that other NRMs have apparently not yet achieved.

23. Pagans are not the only group to dispute the NRM label. ISKCON members have also “complained that the label [is] misleading,” since this group is only really new in the West (Fox 2010, 342). While scholars have similarly interrogated the applicability of the term (Newcombe, Reid-Bowen, Thomas, and Knott 2016), ISKCON generally remains classified as a NRM in most academic spaces.

24. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

Despite some practical reasons for creating distinct Pagan studies spaces, these hubs also functioned to improve Paganism's public perception. Negative baggage still accompanies NRMs. For instance, explaining why she still considers Mormons and Salvation Army to be NRMs, Rabinovitch explains, "the date doesn't change the fact that there are some core values and beliefs that are non-normative."²⁵ Describing why she believes Pagan studies needed its own space, Reid notes, "because New Religious Movements is like, cargo cults in the South Pacific, and Shinto offshoots in Japan, and weird charismatic things in North Korea."²⁶ Weirdness and non-normativity continue to mark NRMs. By establishing distinct spaces for Pagan studies, scholars distance Paganism from these more stigmatized associations.

When distinguishing Paganism from NRMs, scholars also sometimes reinforce negative perceptions. Explaining why NRM does not fit Paganism as a label, Hutton writes, "It [Pagan Witchcraft] does not depend heavily upon one or a few charismatic leaders. It does not appeal overwhelmingly to a particular age group or cultural group. It does not offer a radical break with existing family and social relationships, and does not openly challenge the wider culture" (2019b, 424). First, Hutton's list of characteristics do not necessarily fit all NRMs. Although some were founded by charismatic leaders, many NRMs have adopted means to routinize charisma or have abandoned centralized structures entirely (Lewis 2013). Some groups initially asked members to live communally, but many have abandoned these structures (Karapanagiotis 2018), no longer offering radical breaks from society. Further, despite Hutton's protests, some of these characteristics do fit Paganism. Many traditions have charismatic founders or leaders. Some Pagans challenge the wider culture by critiquing gender and sexual norms (Feraro 2017) or motivating environmental protests (Pike 2019). Clifton demonstrates an even more extreme form

25. Shelley Rabinovitch, interview with Chris Miller, December 13, 2019.

26. Sîân Reid, interview with Chris Miller, January 17, 2020.

of stereotyping NRMs. Justifying why Wicca differs from NRMs, he writes, “Wicca does not . . . countenance ritual suicide . . . Wiccans have not released poison gas in subway cars nor died in shoot-outs with federal authorities” (2018, 348). Pagans are considered unfit as NRMs only by misrepresenting NRMs. Due to stigma surrounding NRMs, scholars legitimize Paganism by selectively highlighting Paganism’s positive attributes, demonizing NRMs, and ignoring similarities between the two.

Granted, Pagan and NRM studies still partly overlap, through courses on NRMs or articles about Paganism published in *Nova Religio* or similar journals. The practical benefits of greater academic exposure motivate preserving some links between the two fields. Further, some Pagan studies scholars still situate their work in NRM studies due to the conversations it opens. Berry sees Paganism and NRMs as distinctly related in their beliefs, organization, and public perception, and values studying Paganism as a NRM due to how both categories “destroy the boundary-making procedures that are put in place by a very Judeo-Christian sort of cultural trajectory.”²⁷ Efforts to distance Paganism and NRMs are therefore not executed at a field-wide level. However, several specific (and influential) movement intellectuals distance the two, allowing scholars to perform boundary maintenance, separating good and bad religions.

Paganism as Indigenous Religion

A more recent naming strategy sees Pagans adopting Indigenous terminology as a tactic of legitimacy. Appropriating religious practices, symbols, or ideas is rooted in the larger colonial theft of Indigenous knowledge and resources, which disproportionately benefits Western practitioners while damaging Indigenous communities (Donaldson 1999; Cameron 2005; Brunk

27. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

and Young 2009; Couchie 2017; Matthes 2019). Scholars have discussed and critiqued the complex dynamics of Pagans taking practices from Indigenous communities (York 2001; Lewis 2009a; Magliocco 2009; Zwissler 2011a, 2011b). However, practitioners who claim the terms Indigenous or native (and scholars who reify these claims) represent a further extension of appropriation.

I use the term indigenizing to describe how Pagans adopt “rhetoric derived from Native American campaigns” to serve their own purposes (Owen 2020, 75). Simpson calls “nativeness” a “discursive tool” that helps Pagan communities filter, adapt, and repurpose changes in the contemporary world (2017, 82). When Pagans make indigenizing claims, or describe themselves using terms including Indigenous, native, or animist, they position themselves as more authentic, significant, or legitimate. Scholars also occasionally support Pagan indigenizing claims. John R. Lovell writes, “the word ‘Pagan’ is an often-misunderstood umbrella term which is used to describe people who practice shamanism and other forms of Earth-based, re-constructed European Indigenous spiritualities” (2019, 93). In his definition, Pagan beliefs and practices become not just re-constructed traditions but re-constructed Indigenous spiritualities. Declaring Paganism a native faith movement is especially prominent in Eastern Europe (Aitamurto and Simpson 2016, 491). Scholars who use this label legitimize emic assertions, validating these modern religions as being somehow Indigenous. York most explicitly supports Paganism’s indigenizing attempts. Identifying common features (ancestor veneration, male and female symbols, polytheism, ritual magic, and valuing nature), York connects many theologically and geographically dispersed Indigenous groups and labels them Pagan (2003, 37-38).

Unsurprisingly, York also adds Western Paganism to this larger category.²⁸ Although crafted as a

28. York received positive praise from such noted Pagan studies scholars as Griffin – who calls this book ““foundational for the emerging field of Pagan Studies”” – and Clifton – who notes that it ““reaffirms Paganism’s

sociological category, York performs legitimation by giving this broad category the title of Pagan religions.

Categorical Legitimation

Re-classification as Indigenous offers Paganism several new legitimation strategies. First, this expands Paganism's size. Recall that Davy combines Pagans and Indigenous religions, then suggests that this represents 5-6 percent of the world's population, or "a statistically significant portion" (2007, 217). Doyle White observes that this reclassification represents "a significant step up from contemporary Paganism's current status as a 'new religious movement'" with roughly a million members worldwide (2016c, 14). Becoming Indigenous helps Pagans expand the numbers within their movement or the movement that scholars study.

Second, this classification reinforces the ancient roots to which some Pagans claim to be connected. Although the idea that Pagans continue an uninterrupted lineage is widely doubted, calling Paganism Indigenous validates these claims. Lisa A. McLoughlin divides the Pagan community into three different types. After Neo-Pagans and Reconstructionists, her third category contains "Indigenous communities that have survived in-situ in Europe" (2019, 3). Describing Pagans in this manner legitimizes (questionable) connections to the past, allowing Pagans to invoke the authority of tradition. For some, Indigenous labels are also a response to disliking the term NRM. By calling Paganism Indigenous, then axiomatically, it cannot be new. After receiving official status as a religion in Britain, Druid Arthur Pendragon notes, "We are looking at the indigenous religion of these isles – it's not a new religion but one of the oldest"

place both as legitimate spiritual expression and as a field of academic inquiry" (NYU Press, n.d.). Both also endorsed York's broad definition when founding *The Pomegranate* and Pagan studies book series, revealing how the larger field validates York's definition.

(BBC 2010). Pendragon uses terms like old and Indigenous to legitimize Druidry, specifically in contrast to new religions. Further, since NRMs are often “ignored as peripheral” (Fox 2010, 349), those who feel that Paganism is delegitimized as a “passing pop-culture fad” (Butler 2019, 96) can validate their tradition as representing a nation’s “true” or “indigenous” religion (91). Once again, some scholars also support Paganism as more profound by denigrating other religions. McLoughlin writes, “In contrast to . . . new age enthusiasts, when discussing US Pagans I am referring to members of world religions . . . who have their own traditions to reach back to and are not attempting to appropriate Indigenous American traditions” (2019, 3). This statement firmly distinguishes Pagans from New Agers, accuses New Agers of appropriation, and legitimizes Pagan connections to an Indigenous past. Proclaiming Indigenous identities offers Pagans a more significant or profound status.

Third, Paganism benefits from calls to respect marginalized perspectives. Postcolonialism demands greater focus on “revaluing” Indigenous religions (Rountree 2017b, 1). Paganism’s legitimacy is bolstered by suggesting that modern practitioners belong (or are connected) to marginalized communities. Connected to a perceived decrease in white privilege, some white Americans began “searching for their ethnic roots” and turning to Heathenry as a meaningful “ethnic” or “sociocultural identity” (Snook, Horrell, and Horton 2017, 47). Brett H. Furth notes that many working- and middle-class US Pagans express frustration due to not recognizing how white privilege shapes their lives, but also (unlike marginalized communities) not being allowed to proudly “anchor their identities in their racial heritage without facing strong social opprobrium” (2017, 335). Describing American Heathens, Jennifer Snook, Thad Horrell, and Kristen Horton write, “claiming indigeneity offers an opportunity to understand oneself not as a global villain, an invading destroyer of distinct and diverse cultures . . . but rather as a fellow

victim of these historical atrocities” (2017, 58). Claiming Paganism as an Indigenous religion allows primarily white practitioners to assert pride, and even claim a marginalized identity.

Finally, in addition to the internal benefits of positioning Paganism as Indigenous, tangible benefits include land rights claims at sites like Stonehenge or Glastonbury Tor. Although access to Stonehenge has been restricted to the public since the 1970s, local Druids have made agreements which ensure special access (Cusack 2012). Claiming a more legitimate or profound connection to the site as the ancestors of ancient inhabitants, Druids receive greater access. Other groups are active in requesting human remains to be reburied according to Pagan rites (Doyle White 2016a, 366). In certain cases, some scholars support Pagan claims. Butler writes, “the author hopes that Druids will be granted authorized access to certain heritage sites . . . and that the Pagan origin of the sites will be given further consideration” (2005, 122). These statements support greater Pagan inclusion in certain spaces. In their *Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights* project, Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis not only advocate for Pagan access to certain sites, but apply the term “new indigenes” to these groups (2004). Such labels further legitimize Pagan claims of indigeneity.

Re-Evaluating this Categorization

Conflating contemporary Paganism with Indigenous religions is problematic for several reasons. Concerning York’s broad definition, scholars note that it is simply unhelpful, cramming many distinct systems into a single category (Neitz 2004; Raphael 2004). Melissa Raphael adds that while Pagans might value being compared to Indigenous groups, others consider this re-categorization offensive (556). Strmiska adds that such definitions combine global Indigenous communities with groups who represent “oppressors and colonizers,” and are therefore damaging

to struggles for postcolonial self-determination (2005a, 11-12). While York acknowledges the criticisms listed above, he stresses that his definition is merely “a sociological device” (2019, 7). However, this sociological device specifically (and exclusively) benefits Western Pagans. Considering that this is a group to which York himself belongs, this sociological device seems to represent a legitimation tactic, rather than a useful analytical tool.

Further, although some scholars have endorsed his definition (NYU Press, n.d.), no scholars actually apply York’s definition in practice. Doyle White writes, “we have simply not seen anything approaching a significant number of scholars of Hinduism, Native American indigenous religion, African diasporic religion, and pre-Christian European religion embrace York’s definition” (2016b, 46). Of 124 *Pomegranate* articles, aside from eight dealing with “pre-Christian or early non-Christian” religions, and one discussing a non-Western form of Paganism, the journal is entirely concerned with Western Paganism (46).²⁹ Similarly, most presentations in the AAR’s Pagan studies unit focus on Western Paganism, save for papers in co-sponsored sessions with Indigenous or African diaspora units. Partnering with such units help Pagan studies scholars legitimize claims that more communities fit under contemporary Paganism’s umbrella. However, these co-sponsored sessions are anomalous, and hardly representative of what Pagan studies does. Re-classifying Pagans as Indigenous is an act of appropriation that offers no analytical benefit, and solely serves Paganism’s image.

Such definitions are also problematic due to their inaccuracy. Paganism remains predominantly white (Magliocco 2004, 61), and most members do not share the same histories of oppression as Indigenous communities. Even among European Pagans (where practitioners are potentially closer geographically to their ancestral roots and not occupying stolen Indigenous

29. As of 2021 and the most recent *Pomegranate* volume, this trend persists, with one article about pre-Christian religion in Greece, and 33 concerning Western forms of Paganism.

land) there is “lack of documented historical evidence that these places were the ritual sites of Druids” (Butler 2005, 98). Instead, practitioners emphasize “spiritual ancestry and intuitive feeling” (98). North American Pagans, who often have especially tenuous ties to indigeneity, bolster ties to their European ancestry by noting that certain practices “sing” for them or emphasizing what they call “blood memory” (Furth 2017, 320-1).³⁰ While some Pagans legitimize their practices as representing their ethnic or Indigenous traditions, these claims are merely rooted in intuitive connections to a specific ancestry.

Noting further issues with these indigenizing narratives, Simpson adds that definitions of Indigenous religions fall short when applied to certain communities (2017). The UN’s criteria for Indigenous communities lists several characteristics, including self-identification as Indigenous, historical continuity with pre-colonial societies, strong link to territories, distinct social, economic, or political systems, and distinct language, culture, and belief (UNPFII 2008, 8). While some of these traits may apply, others (e.g., historical continuity) are contentious at best. Others still (e.g., distinct social, economic, and political systems) are entirely missing, revealing wide gaps between Pagans and what are traditionally defined as Indigenous communities.

To overcome the gaps between modern Westerners and Indigenous persons, some Pagans emphasize experiences of colonization in their ancestry to strengthen their connections to indigeneity. Discussing Ukrainian Native Faith, Ivakhiv writes, “Neopagans assert [that] Christianity was responsible for destroying the glorious culture that had existed before it” (2005, 219). Regarding Romuva in Lithuania, Strmiska and Dundzila note, “their nation’s historical resistance to Christianization is retold . . . with great solemnity as a kind of ‘foundation myth’”

30. According to Furth, “blood memory” is a concept with roots in Jungian psychology that practitioners use to describe feeling connected or attached to traditions and practices with which their ancestors may have engaged.

(2005, 243). Narratives that emphasize marginalization strengthen parallels with Indigenous communities. However, these narratives fail to accurately contextualize history. For example, discussing statements made by one Pagan representative, Lee Gilmore suggests that this figure “conflate[s] the Christianization of Europe . . . with Roman conquest and domination” (2018, 191-2). By specifically emphasizing battles, Pagans ignore that Christianization was a gradual, complex process. Further, narrative re-framing of history often fails to distinguish “contemporary, educated, urban Europeans” from “peoples of European antiquity” (192). While indeed some Pagans have ancestral roots among “decentralized non-Roman tribes,” modern practitioners are “more significantly shaped by more recent historical events” (192).

Labelling Paganism as Indigenous also reinforces damaging ideologies. In response to modernity, many Pagans use Indigenous communities as a meaning template. Cusack explains that modern Western people often project “deep wisdom that has been lost” onto both ancient cultures and contemporary Indigenous people (2012, 150). However, conflating ancient civilizations and modern Indigenous people constructs living Indigenous groups as a primitive other. Reinforcing that the claim itself is an act of appropriation, Pagans use the term Indigenous purely to serve their own interests, and harm other groups in the process.

There are important differences between Pagans in North America who claim to be reviving the ethnic, religious, or folkloric traditions of their ancestors and those European Pagans (who live in Europe) doing the same thing. In settler-colonialist societies such as Canada and the United States, this is more obviously a tactic to get on the right side of history and, particularly when adopting practices like herb smudging, to distance oneself from accusations of cultural appropriation. In contrast, European Pagans who make claims to indigeneity are often interpreted as responding to globalization and modernity (Rountree 2015a). Although I do not wish to

conflate the two contexts in which indigenizing claims are made, both have the potential to be problematic and are nonetheless connected in important ways. First, as mentioned, both claims often rely on (at best) flawed interpretations of history and (at worst) trivializing the experiences of living Indigenous communities. Further, whether made in Europe or North America, these claims have the potential to support racism and nationalism. Finally, due to the global interconnectivity of Pagan communities, the particular strategies by which one practitioner (say, a modern Druid living in Ireland) situates their identity can be used to legitimize the perspective and practices of other Pagans (for instance, a Celtic Witch living in the American Southwest).

How Scholars Participate

As with most tactics of legitimacy discussed thus far, declaring Paganism to be an Indigenous religion is something that Pagans already do, unaided by scholars. Communities like Rodzimowierstwo in Poland or Rodnoverie in Russia also have names that literally translate to “native faith,” explicitly positioning practitioners as Indigenous. Aitamurto summarizes the challenges that scholars face describing such groups: “Paganism is often considered derogatory by followers,” adding, “reluctance to use the word ‘Paganism’ may reveal some attempt to join the social mainstream or, at least, to avoid becoming a stigmatized movement” (2016, 13). In Lithuania, Dalia Senvaityte notes that some Romuvians dislike the term Paganism, positioning themselves instead as a native faith (2018, 246). Upholding emic terminology may seem especially important when certain terms greatly increase the odds of state recognition. While one can justify this classification by appeals to take practitioners’ perspectives seriously, these claims of indigeneity are also damaging to other communities. Granted, in some cases, scholars are critical of Pagans appropriating indigenizing language to legitimize their traditions (Snook,

Horrell, and Horton 2017; Fisk 2017). However, when scholars fail to call attention to how preferences are part of a claims-making process, and clearly outline the legitimizing work performed by such labels, they simply repeat – and therefore reify – assertions that Paganism is in some way Indigenous.³¹

This section explores how Pagan studies scholars occasionally (perhaps even inadvertently) support indigenizing claims from Pagans. Scholars sometimes explicitly assert comparisons to Indigenous communities. Lovell draws a parallel between the colonization of Canadian First Nations communities and “the Indigenous Celtic people in Britain and Ireland” (2019, 103). Abby Maxwell writes, “despite the Church’s exhaustive efforts, the resilient networks could not be incinerated: today a multiplicity of pagan-like lifeways remain,” pointing to Reclaiming and Dianic Witchcraft (2020, 11). Ignoring how the members of these groups are implicated in the broader span of Western colonialism, both scholars discursively align Paganism in opposition to these processes. Anne Ferlat suggests that European native faiths “reveal common features with indigenous peoples and other cultural minorities” (2019, 1). Describing the ritual that a French Druid community conduct for instance, Ferlat adds, “perhaps we are witnessing the beginning of an indigenous European presence” (12). Comparing US Pagan and Indigenous literatures, McLoughlin writes, “both communities, beyond simply valuing their relationship with the land, consider it as part of their own identity” (2019, 1).³² These statements align Pagans with historically marginalized communities, thereby reifying self-perceptions among Pagans who position themselves as Indigenous. In one instance that borders on

31. Other issues arise from failing to properly nuance statements. Lovell calls Àsatrú “an Indigenous Pagan religion involving worship of the ancient Norse gods” (2019, 102). Although Lovell primarily discusses Àsatrú in Iceland (where it may indeed be Indigenous), there are also Asatruar in North America and elsewhere, many without roots in Iceland. There is a danger in scholars simply claiming that *x* group is Indigenous without the proper nuance.

32. Further, considering that McLoughlin writes “primarily for an audience of Indigenous Americans and US Pagans,” she intends to shape communities through these comparisons (2019, 1).

apologetics, McLoughlin makes a plea to Indigenous Americans for why they should “consider opening a conversation with US Pagans about working together” (2019, 8). Tracing similarities between these two groups, McLoughlin attempts to leverage these connections to gain certain benefits, such as exclusive access to certain sites.

In other cases, scholars fail to interrogate the legitimization tactics that practitioners assert. Describing modern Pagans living in Texas, Furth observes, “ethnic Neo-Pagans are attempting to forge middle paths that allow them distinctly religious ways to re-value their European racial and ethnic identities” (2017, 336). Highlighting the benefits in these largely white, Southern US practitioners asserting “I’m proud of my Irish heritage” versus “I’m proud of my white heritage” — the latter being considered distinctly racist while the former could potentially “be interpreted as pride of ethnic heritage” (338) — Furth fails to interrogate the actual ancestral connections behind these assertions. For instance, while most informants strongly identify with Irish, Scottish, or Welsh practices, most are a mix of several different European nationalities. Many also belong to *Ár nDraíocht Féin* (ADF), a Druid Fellowship that draws on Irish culture. Furth fails to consider the work of ADF in assembling packages of ready-to-adopt myths, rituals, and deities. Rather than being drawn to deities and practices from their ancestry (which would theoretically include French or German traditions), informants solely engage with practices assembled by a particular organization. Especially since some informants expressed frustration with not being able to declare pride in their whiteness, Furth fails to draw attention to the identity work that these constructed ancestries perform. This omission legitimizes these ethnic Pagan identities and implicitly authorizes claims from informants that they are not racist.

Describing Pagans is a complex task because this diverse community adopts such divergent labels. Since “native faith” is indeed the title by which some groups self-identify, a

certain amount of complicity in describing some Pagans as native or Indigenous faith movements could be forgiven. However, important legitimizing work is also performed through labelling. Describing Romuva in Lithuania, Senvaityte describes how this religious movement is sometimes used by politicians to boost their popularity, mask political ideologies, or distance oneself from more stigmatized terms (2018). Similarly, connecting modern Druidry to stone circles in Britain helps prop up nationalist narratives of British greatness (Owen 2020). Describing the task of scholars, Zwissler explains, “our job is not just to describe or to quote. Part of what we can give back is the special perspective that anthropology gives us. So that requires that we be analytical, and it requires that we be critical.”³³ Zwissler adds, “while I’m very sympathetic to anxiety about outward facing representation, I also think sometimes that can get in the way of telling important truth about what we’re finding in the communities that we’re working with.”³⁴ Being analytical does not mean demonizing Pagans as colonialist appropriators. Scholars can describe a practitioner as being legitimate, while still observing that their interpretation of history is off-base or that their indigenizing claims are harmful (Zwissler 2011b; 2018b). This self-identification does not necessarily make that practitioner a bad person. However, if scholars merely describe what communities do or what they call themselves, without interrogating or at least highlighting the appropriation of Indigenous practices, history, and terminology, scholars can inadvertently implicate themselves in the appropriation that practitioners are performing.

33. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

34. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

What's in a Name?

This chapter explored how scholars rhetorically legitimize Paganism and Pagan studies, or suggest that Paganism is more important than it might otherwise appear. For example, while Paganism is smaller than many other religions, numeric deficits are overcome by emphasizing rapid growth. This performs legitimation by assuring practitioners that their religion is important. Such claims also benefit Pagan studies by suggesting that more scholars should observe this growing phenomenon. Another legitimation tactic is linking Paganism to other movements. The category NRM, for example, helps Paganism enter a broader discourse, offering greater exposure. However, not all Pagans are thrilled with who else occupies this category. While Paganism commonly appears across NRM courses and journals, some scholars distance their work from this label (and its associated connotations). Pagans also connect themselves with larger movements by labelling Paganism as an Indigenous religion. This enlarges Paganism's size and connects Paganism to discourses of marginalization. Although this categorization is highly problematic, recent growth of self-described native faith movements in Europe suggests that this rhetorical tactic may become a common trend.

Scholars may not even always recognize the particular constructs which they uphold when describing Paganism. Scholars who emphasize Paganism's fast growth, for example, do not argue for Paganism's legitimacy, but rather reinforce the idea that big equals legitimate. The same applies when scholars trace similarities between Paganism and Christianity or other religions. However, rather than interrogate whether having a sacred text or celebrating a festival in December makes a religion legitimate (Stewart 2011), scholars reinforce the importance of Christianity as an ideal type. Rather than starting from a place of presumed legitimacy, or interrogating the metrics traditionally used to judge legitimacy, scholars uphold such metrics and

ensure that one new group gets a seat at the table. A similar legitimation occurs through the claim that Pagans are Indigenous. Since connections to ancient ancestry are part of some Pagans' self-perceptions, there is occasionally a desire to protect these claims. As noted, protecting such claims also legitimizes the idea that something must be ancient to be important. Further, protecting such assertions may also inadvertently harm other communities.

Calling Paganism an Indigenous religion also reveals a dilemma in the field regarding the function of scholarly classifications. Scholars often note that Paganism represents an umbrella term encompassing specific groups and overarching beliefs. Many native faith movements in Europe are marked by these same beliefs and practices, such as drawing on pre-Christian folklore, celebrating seasonal cycles, and valuing nature. Therefore, applying the term Pagan to these groups seems justified, regardless of whether this may upset some practitioners. By using the term native faith to describe these groups, scholars reject the etic label that this field has created, instead legitimizing claims within these groups. The future use of this term can therefore reveal how scholars conceptualize this field's relationship to the communities being studied. What is the value of the etic scholarly constructions that the field has created? When (if ever) are scholars critical of practitioners?

Masuzawa suggests that it is gratuitous to even challenge the reality of the world religions discourse now that it is so firmly entrenched in academia (2005, 2). However, Masuzawa also revealed that this category masks particular ideologies. Recognizing the legitimizing work of categorization should prompt scholars to reflect on the labels they use and ensure that they make theoretical and practical sense. Critically reflecting on which categories and terms Pagan studies scholars employ (and the reasons expressed for rejecting or embracing certain labels) is especially necessary regarding the labels NRM and Indigenous. When rejecting

the former label, scholars perform defensive othering, reinforcing negative stereotypes against NRMs. When embracing the latter label, scholars support the legitimizing work that Pagans are trying to perform. At best, scholars perpetuate cultural imperialism. At worst, scholars may downplay or support racist or nationalist outlooks. Ellsworth cautions scholars to “be wary that terms . . . are not treated as things,” but rather to “view labels as bundles of relationships . . . built on varying power dynamics” (200). Moving forward, Pagan studies should reflect more carefully on the different bundles of relationships that exist in the terms scholars employ. Rather than simply upholding how Pagans want the community to be seen, more fruitful academic inquiries can describe and interrogate the power relationships at play.

Chapter 8 – Exiting the Academy? Scholars as Media and Legal Consultants

Most legitimation tactics discussed thus far have been rhetorical and confined to academia. This chapter explores how scholars occasionally speak beyond the academy as it is traditionally envisioned. Discussing the importance of Pagan studies as a field, Hutton highlights “the importance of works by academic authors, in forming the opinions of journalists, documentary-makers, police, social workers, prison warders, magistrates, medics and members of the nursing profession” (2009, 226). Scholars who write op-ed pieces about Pagans or answer a journalist’s questions about a news story shape public perceptions around Paganism. The perspectives that scholars share, when distributed through news media, also tend to reach larger audiences than academic publications. Scholars who serve as expert witnesses in legal proceedings can have even more tangible impacts, possibly shaping what materials an incarcerated Pagan can access. Finally, while these kinds of opportunities are relatively rare, several scholars shared that they approach their work with an awareness that their publications might be consulted by governing bodies. This particular realm in which scholars are occasionally involved also raises issues surrounding the relationship between scholarship and advocacy.

Since marginal communities require greater efforts to assert their importance, legitimation is most apparent in fields studying such groups. Concerning Paganism's marginality, some scholars responded to my question of whether Pagans are marginalized with a decisive yes. In contrast, some nuanced their response. Rev. Deoin Cleveland notes that despite instances of Pagans feeling excluded from mainstream institutions, "a majority of the marginalization that Pagans currently experience is social as opposed to systemic."¹ While some fear harassment (Tejeda 2015; McClure 2017), Pagans are generally legally protected from discrimination. Doyle White adds that since governments are unlikely to imprison Wiccans for their faith, "it is perhaps fair to say that many Wiccans perceive themselves to be far more persecuted than they actually are" (2016c, 174). Despite some examples of social hostility, Pagans are not often systemically discriminated against.

Another aspect of marginality concerns the visibility of Pagan identity. Ewing-Meyer explains that since Pagans are not immediately identifiable as Pagans, "it's not going to keep you from employment or from education or anything like that."² In general, Pagans are white, well educated, and working or middle class, meaning they "are demographically mainstream" (Berger, Leach, and Shaffer 2003, 34), and therefore differ from other groups who cannot control if identity is revealed. Further complicating marginality is some Pagans' commitment to being counter-cultural. Ewing-Meyer explains that a Pagan worldview "is something that is created intentionally counter-culturally, and intentionally on the margins. To be separate."³ Reflecting a conscious alignment in contrast to mainstream culture, Hutton adds, "Modern Pagans and

1. Deoin Cleveland, interview with Chris Miller, February 25, 2019.

2. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

3. Erik Ewing-Meyer, interview with Chris Miller, October 8, 2019.

witches commonly identify their religious traditions with the poor, persecuted and marginalised, and the losers of history” (2019a, 251).

While nuance is necessary to properly contextualize Pagan marginality, Pagans still occasionally find themselves in disadvantaged positions. That a wrongful termination claim would be supported in court, for instance, might mean little to someone who just lost their long-time job. Cleveland adds, “if you’re discriminated against, you’re likely going to leave the situation rather than spend money, time, and effort to give court challenges.”⁴ Certain contexts, such as raising a child or running a Pagan business, also render one’s identity more scrutinized.

Highlighting bias against Pagans in public institutions, Jay Wexler shares the story of a US Sergeant who was killed in combat in Afghanistan (2019, 37-8). Although his dog tag listed Wicca as his religion, his wife discovered that the pentacle was not allowed to appear on his gravestone.⁵ This story first highlights the layers of legitimacy within institutions. This sergeant presumably had some accommodations for his religious affiliation, considering that Wicca was engraved on his dog tags. However, the military was still unwilling to make other accommodations. With the help of Circle Sanctuary and Selena Fox (and a lengthy legal battle), Veteran Affairs eventually approved the pentacle for national cemetery headstones. This incident also reveals the ripple effects of legitimacy. After two headstones with pentacles were placed at Arlington National Cemetery, Wexler notes, “many Pagans serving in the military came out of the ‘broom closet’ and started practicing more openly” (54). Revealing some pan-Pagan benefits of activism, after approving the pentacle for Wiccans, the VA has since approved the Hammer of

4. Deoin Cleveland, interview with Chris Miller, February 25, 2019.

5. As an aside, the reasons for denying the pentacle appeared were equal parts bureaucracy and prejudice. According to Wexler, Wiccans had been trying to get the VA to approve the pentacle since 1997, though applications were met with silence, redirection, and further applications. Once the issue went to trial in 2005 however, there appeared to also be some bias against Wicca as a religion, stemming from comments by George W. Bush that, in his eyes, Witchcraft is not a religion.

Thor (a symbol in Heathenry) and the Awen (a Druid symbol). Arthur explains that the AAR, and Pagan studies scholars therein, also played a role facilitating the outcome: “there were a number of people who were tied into that, and who were public on behalf of that, to make those arguments to government and show legitimacy.”⁶ Numerous activist organizations and individual Pagans work to help Pagan communities be recognized as legitimate. This chapter explores how scholars occasionally intersect with such issues, and assume roles as advocates.

Pagan Chaplains

One form of tangible legitimacy for religions are chaplaincy programs in hospitals, prisons, and the military. This section explores the history of Pagan chaplains and discusses important contributions from scholars. Chaplains provide ritual assistance, consultation, and support for inmates, patients, soldiers, and other members within an institution. Representation also offers Pagans within a given institution “a sense of internal legitimacy” (Snook 2015, 87). Once a chaplain is established, Pagans have a dedicated representative to serve their needs. Officials trying to help Pagans (or determine what constitutes a legitimate request) have identifiable figures to whom they can direct inquiries. Presence in one institution can also be used to advocate for Pagan representatives in other institutions.

In addition to supporting Pagans, chaplains can also facilitate growth. Some chaplains indicate a “desire to make Wicca and Paganism a publicly available religious choice” as motivating their work (Gagnon 2008, 164). Following the first Pagan chaplains being approved to assist in Canadian prisons, Mireille Gagnon describes a “dramatic increase” of incarcerated Pagans in Ontario in the early 2000s (161). Having dedicated chaplains can also increase

6. Shawn Arthur, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

disclosure among existing Pagan inmates, since there will actually be benefits to expressing this affiliation. Further, some inmates only identified as Pagan *after* entering prison, having “discovered it from the inside” (168nn28). Chaplaincy programs facilitate legitimacy by increasing exposure and reinforcing Paganism as a valid religious choice.

Negative perceptions present hurdles to establishing Pagan chaplains. Mainstream perceptions conflate Paganism with, at best, a silly or childish belief, and at worst, sexual abuse and violence. This makes institutions reluctant to establish supports. Prejudice even exists among other chaplains. For example, a survey of US campus chaplains found that many were concerned about cults on college campuses, with “Pagan/Wiccan” being cited as one group of concern (Elleven, Greenhaw, and Allen 2004, 320). Establishing chaplains therefore requires first convincing people that Paganism is worthy of accommodation.

Describing the situation in Canada, Gagnon estimates that roughly 20 Wiccans and Pagans perform prison chaplaincy work (159). Wiccans were first integrated into chaplaincy services in 1991, represented by the Wiccan Church of Canada (WCC). Since the WCC does not represent all Canadian Wiccans (to say nothing of non-Wiccan Pagans), the Pagan Federation/Fédération Païenne du Canada established Pagan Pastoral Outreach in 1994 as an alternative (161). Institutions are more likely to find these public-facing Pagan organizations than they are to locate a local High Priestess. However, both may fail to represent how a particular inmate understands their faith, occasionally causing tension between chaplains and their constituents (Gagnon 2008, 168).

Despite attempts at Interfaith consulting or volunteer representatives, some accommodations simply cannot (or will not) be made. For example, prisons especially are unwilling to permit items that may be considered dangerous (Gagnon 2008, 158). In the US for

example, representatives are allowed to bring wands, stones, pentacles, tarot cards, and books to facilitate practices, but athames or daggers are not permitted (Bess 2016). Although daggers seem like a fairly obvious ritual tool that prisons would reject, issues also result from a general lack of knowledge concerning Pagan practices. Lack of centralized institutions in Paganism makes it difficult to arbitrate legitimate practices. Approval is often subject to whether a single (non-Pagan) chaplain deems something permissible. Due to Paganism's decentralized nature, scholars sometimes act as brokers of knowledge, advising what should be permitted.

Diversity in Paganism also creates issues of credentialing. Lori Beaman notes that Wicca's "lack of hierarchical structure" and emphasis on individuality is a disadvantage when seeking recognition from government institutions (2006, 176). Joanne Benham Rennick adds that when evaluating potential chaplains, institutions such as the Canadian Forces (CF) favour "Christian clergy trained in Western pedagogical systems" (2010, 84). Since required credentials for CF chaplains include a Master of Divinity, two years of civilian pastoral service, and a commendation from the Chaplain General, minority religions are potentially excluded. Not all Wiccan High Priestesses have degrees to certify their authority, nor will these degrees necessarily be recognized by governments. Expecting chaplains to have pastoral experience in civilian contexts also challenges traditions that are not recognized in other institutions, creating a vicious cycle wherein recognition begets recognition.

Even if Pagans are recognized as a legitimate religion worthy of accommodation, another issue is when to appoint chaplains. A 2013 case in the US correctional system highlights such problems. A Wiccan sued a prison for refusing to hire a paid, full-time Wiccan chaplain, adding that there were more Wiccan inmates than other faiths that had designated chaplains (Robertson 2014, 241). The court rejected the argument that the plaintiff's free exercise of religion was

being restricted, because lacking a dedicated chaplain did not preclude Wiccans the reasonable opportunity to practice their religion. However, the court supported the plaintiff's second claim concerning the establishment of religion. The selective hiring of chaplains amounted to "unconstitutional endorsement" of certain religions (241). Clarifying the requirements for appointing a Pagan chaplain, one Canadian chaplain trainer explained, "if there was a demonstrated need, then they'd be accommodated – eventually" (Benham Rennick 2011, 56). Comparisons between Canadian and US institutions are limited by differences in how religions are treated before the law, but this case highlights that accommodating minority faiths, though important, does not equate to hiring representatives. One Navy chaplain told Benham Rennick, "Our one Muslim chaplain would be useless on a ship . . . He couldn't do a Sunday liturgy and about 99.9% of the crew are Christian" (2011, 58). Similarly, Christians represent between 69% to 92% of the Canadian prison population (Gagnon 2008, 154), meaning most prisons have primarily Christian chaplains. Other faiths are represented by a "contract chaplain" or a "multifaith council" that provide assistance and/or consultation (154). Therefore, the small number of Pagans found in public institutions like the military or prisons limits the perceived utility of Pagan chaplains.⁷

How Scholars Participate

Although activist efforts to establish chaplains are primarily undertaken by advocacy groups and Pagans within specific institutions, scholars help to facilitate representation in

7. Christian dominance affects other minority religions, just as it affects Paganism. Common attempts to remedy this narrow representation include, for example, Canada's Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy, which represents thirty different confessional groups, or the Correctional Service of Canada creating a chaplaincy manual describing minority traditions (Gagnon 2008, 155-7).

various ways. Scholars who simply write about Pagan chaplaincy issues (Gagnon 2008; Benham Rennick 2011), for instance, may perform implicit advocacy by drawing attention to these issues. More directly, some scholars legitimize Pagan chaplains through their professional service. As chair of the AAR's Committee for the Public Understanding of Religion, Pike hosted workshops and presentations for (predominantly Christian) chaplains. These workshops may not lead to Pagan chaplains being established, but they facilitate legitimacy by explaining Pagan beliefs and practices to the people who decide how to accommodate beliefs and practices. Pike explains, "they really felt unprepared ... some of them didn't want to minister to Pagans, and some of them wanted to, but didn't know anything."⁸ By describing Samhain (a Pagan festival falling between October 31 and November 1 that celebrates the end of the harvest season), explaining why this event is important, what a ritual might look like, and what requests (or alternatives) would be realistic, scholars help chaplains take Pagan requests seriously.

Pike has also been consulted to inform prisons and courts about what rights and privileges should be extended to Pagan inmates.⁹ By arguing in court that these groups are legitimate, and explaining what accommodations are required or reasonable, scholars support Pagans in more tangible ways, shaping how institutions (and chaplains) treat Pagan inmates. Although such cases likely call on many expert witnesses (including prison officials, practitioners, and existing chaplains), scholars play a role as brokers of knowledge. They use their recognized position as experts to advocate on behalf of a community about which they have acquired extensive knowledge.

Scholars also support Pagan chaplains through institutions like Cherry Hill Seminary (CHS). The requirement that many chaplains must possess graduate-level degrees challenges

8. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

9. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

Pagans who may not want to attend a Christian seminary. CHS aims to resolve Paganism's lack of credentialing institutions by offering Community Ministry Certificates and Master of Divinity degrees. Although currently not accredited, CHS's first MDiv recipient had her theological education equivalency recognized by the Association of Professional Chaplains after she demonstrated that training from CHS was comparable to what one might receive from accredited seminaries (Greene 2012). Discussing the implications of this recognition, Greene writes, "it will 'earmark' [CHS] as a legitimate school of higher education on par with any other accredited academic seminary" (2012). This reputation is supported by the school's "high academic standards, rigorous programs of study and degreed teachers" (2012). Discussing the relationship between CHS and traditional academia, Greene explains, "it's a way for Pagan academics to use their experience as a professor and skills as a researcher ... and simultaneously give back to the Pagan community as a whole."¹⁰ Despite lacking accreditation, scholars support CHS by lending their credentials and prestige. Supporting the school's academic standards, CHS's faculty and advisory council boasts several prominent Pagan studies scholars, including Jenny Blain, Vivianne Crowley, Hutton, and York (Cherry Hill Seminary, n.d.a., n.d.d.). Beyond accreditation, another route to having graduates recognized as chaplaincy candidates "involves representatives of three other schools vouching" that a MDiv from CHS is "equivalent to their own degrees" (Ward 2016). Professional scholars who teach classes help CHS position itself as suitably academic, which would become helpful if CHS seeks validation from other schools.

Although, as discussed, CHS is not accredited or recognized by many other theological colleges, it offers a way for scholars to support the recognition of Pagan chaplains. Scholars lend

10. Heather Greene, interview with Chris Miller, November 15, 2019.

their energy (and credentials) to help CHS assert its legitimacy. CHS in turn can help Pagans achieve the credentials required to become chaplains.

Pagans in the News

Legitimacy is also constructed through the media. Academic publications may influence scholars and students, but may not impact mainstream perceptions of Paganism. News stories can have a greater impact on what the average person knows about Paganism. Although stories about Pagans sometimes appear without a scholar's perspective (Singh-Kurtz and Kopf 2018; Snowden 2019), stories that consult scholars benefit from the reinforced legitimacy of their expertise. A *Los Angeles Times* article introduces Helen Berger as “a professor at Brandeis University who has been studying witches and pagans for 30 years” (Netburn 2019). The same article introduces Sabina Magliocco as “an anthropologist at the University of British Columbia.” Foregrounding these positions lends authority to whatever they say about Pagans. This section explores how scholars legitimize and destigmatize Paganism as media consultants.

Scholars are most frequently consulted in October, as media outlets prepare stories on Halloween, followed by December, when stories about Yule become popular. Zwissler shares, “it’s the call everyone gets in October. Like, ‘oh we’re doing a Halloween thing, we heard there are Witches! What’s that all about?’”¹¹ Describing her experiences consulting for such articles, Reece explains, “that’s actually kind of the fun one, ‘cause that gives you a chance to like, introduce people to what Paganism is.”¹² Since such stories do not require scholars to “protect people from the state,” Zwissler adds that there is considerably less pressure and intensity.¹³

11. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

12. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

13. Laurel Zwissler, interview with Chris Miller, May 5, 2019.

However, such stories still provide legitimacy through exposure and destigmatization. Taking advantage of times when media outlets are interested in Witches, scholars render Pagans more palatable to mainstream audiences. At times, scholars explain historical links between Samhain and Halloween (Carnes 2019), showing how Pagan and mainstream holidays have similar origins. In other cases, scholars use Samhain as an entryway to explain such additional details as how many Pagans there are in the US, how Wicca developed, or what Pagan rituals look like (Berger 2020). These stories offer inroads to introduce Pagans to wider audiences.

Scholars also contextualize Witchcraft, by explaining why it has recently become popular. Paraphrasing Magliocco, Deborah Netburn writes, “a loss of faith in institutions, particularly the government, and organized religion has led large swaths of the population to feel unmoored” (2019). In a *New York Times* article, Berger explains, “There’s an increase of globalization, an enormous amount of polarization, and for many of these young people, this spirituality is speaking to them” (Bennett 2019). Both scholars explain in rational terms why people are attracted to this religion. Scholars also often correct misconceptions of Witchcraft as evil or silly. Magliocco explains, “when people sneer at ‘magic’ it’s because they don’t understand how people are using it,” proceeding to show how Witchcraft simply offers practitioners practical life advice (Netburn 2019). Through destigmatization and demystification, scholars legitimize Paganism as a more typical, mainstream identity.

Although, as noted, stories around Halloween tend to be fairly innocuous, consulting with media is potentially risky due to how scholars may lose control of their own words. Unlike a journal article, in which scholars choose which topics they discuss, which words they use, and in what order, media outreach involves sharing one’s knowledge on an issue, then trusting that a journalist will faithfully reproduce one’s perspectives. Describing potential pitfalls, Pike shares a

story of speaking with a journalist after the Heaven's Gate suicides in 1997. Pike shared fairly general information, namely that most religions begin as cults, and this term is often used by mainstream religions to distinguish characteristics that they consider bad (2015, 176). Pike also answered general questions about NRMs in her area, and whether they actively recruited on her campus. A news story aired later titled "Vampire Cults in Chico," splicing Pike's comments in between rumours of a "'blood-drinking cult' recruiting on college campuses" (176). This incident reveals the lack of control that scholars have, and possible reasons why some may be hesitant to speak with the media.

Especially since media is already likely to demonize NRMs (Wright 1997), many scholars offer broad and, occasionally, supportive perspectives. Some scholars with whom I spoke expressed that their desire to do media outreach was motivated by recognizing that if journalists did not find a scholar sympathetic to NRMs, then published stories could potentially be even worse.¹⁴ Magliocco is so active in media outreach because she believes that scholars have a duty to inform the public: "If you're not gonna share research, particularly research that is publicly funded...then you're not doing your job...you are falling down ethically as a researcher, if you don't share what you find."¹⁵ Clarifying how scholars can fulfill this duty, Magliocco breaks down the multiple publics that scholars reach. Research dissemination (typically occurring through presentations or publications) is generally shared with small, specialized groups, who are often interested in the theoretical implications of one's findings.¹⁶ Magliocco notes that while the broader public (often reached through media) are uninterested in theory, scholars can still educate people, explaining, "maybe with the general public, my aim is, 'hey,

14. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

15. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

16. A slightly larger public includes students, who are concerned with how one small group can help understand the discipline(s) that students are entering.

Witches are not bad, and they're not out to cast evil spells on you, and they don't worship the devil."¹⁷ Consulting for news stories may not require scholars to draw on their extensive expertise. Indeed, their contribution often amounts to one or two brief quotes. However, Magliocco believes scholars have a responsibility to educate outside academia, and media consultation helps fulfill this duty.

Pagan Crimes?

Stories that involve crimes with (alleged) Pagan connections reinforce the media's role in shaping perceptions about communities. Presumably to attract intrigue and clicks, terms such as occult or ritual are often explicitly referenced in the headlines of true crime news stories (Dziemianowicz 2021; Warnock 2021). Even when a crime had nothing to do with Paganism (beyond the victim's or suspect's religious affiliation), such headlines and the speculation that they foster can delegitimize the broader religion. Examining one particular event, this section analyzes several news stories – some which consulted experts and others which did not – to trace how the media delegitimizes new religions and how scholars counter these effects and legitimize Pagans.

In July 2015, a mother and two sons were discovered dead in their Florida home. Sheriff David Morgan told reporters that police were “investigating a connection with ‘witchcraft,’” suggesting that the victims’ injuries, positioning of bodies, and person of interest indicated ties to Paganism (Woolf 2015). Sheriff’s Office spokesperson Andrew Hobbes added that the incident was “suspected to be a ‘Wiccan ritual killing’ related to the ‘blue’ moon” (Calabrese 2015).

17. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

These statements both reflect and perpetuate common stereotypes, namely that new religions encourage violence and are inherently dangerous (Cowan and Hadden 2004; Moore 2016).

NBC News titled its story “‘Wiccan Ritual Killing’ Leaves Family of Three Dead in Pensacola: Police” (Calabrese 2015). The *New York Daily News* and *The Washington Post* similarly ran headlines that reinforce a connection to Witchcraft (Golgowski 2015; Moyer 2015). In contrast, *The Guardian*’s story was titled “Wicca experts denounce Florida sheriff for linking triple murder to ‘witchcraft’” (Woolf 2015). While one story foregrounds a reaction – police being corrected by scholars – most others foreground a connection between Witchcraft and ritual murder.¹⁸

The content of stories further reveals how Paganism is presented to mainstream audiences. Due to the Sheriff suggesting links between this crime and Paganism, the *NBC News* article offers background information about Wicca. Erin Calabrese explains that Wicca draws on pre-Christian European traditions, and that practitioners engage with magic, worship nature, and believe in multiple deities (2015). To Calabrese’s credit, she offers a disclaimer: “The religion does not encourage the practice of ritual killings.” Following this statement however, Calabrese includes statistics that potentially make Wicca appear threatening: “The number of Americans who identify as Wiccan has risen from about 8,000 in 1990 to 342,000 in 2008.” The suggestion that NRMs are violent poses a less serious threat if their meager numbers are recognized. However, a popular means of demonizing NRMs is exaggerating the threat that they present to society (Dawson 2006, 179). In the context of this triple homicide, readers might perceive a

18. Similarly, while *The Guardian* used a picture of the home where the crime occurred, *NBC News* used a photo of a moon shining through clouds. Likely chosen for aesthetic appeal, this picture reinforces the assertion that a lunar event motivated ritual murder.

suggested meteoric rise as proof that Wiccans are rapidly invading American society, and posing a threat due to their violent nature.

A quote from a neighbour closes this story: “‘It’s frightening to think about. Especially when you have small children,’ . . . ‘To find out that it was this weird, satanic cult, witchcraft whatever, is just really unsettling’” (Calabrese 2015). This neighbour first reveals that locals have internalized the Sheriff’s allegations of Paganism being somehow involved. Further, while neighbors would likely already be unsettled by a triple homicide next door, Wicca’s apparent growth potentially makes readers across the US wary of a growing threat. In this instance, the media distorts Paganism’s image by sensationalizing Witchcraft, or at the very least, not interrogating the state’s (unfounded) assertions.

In contrast, some articles consulted experts to help explain the story. One story consulted the leader of a nearby Wiccan coven (Michaelson 2015). While this person has knowledge about Wicca, their proximity to the event makes them highly invested in how the crime is discussed, meaning readers might dismiss them as biased. Representing a slightly more balanced perspective, *The Guardian* consulted Selena Fox, described as “a Wiccan priestess and the senior minister of Circle Sanctuary” (Woolf 2015). Fox explains, “‘Ritual murder is not part of the Wiccan religion,’” and adds that the Sheriff’s statements constitute defamation. Fox destigmatizes Wicca by refuting the idea that the murders have a religious connection, and chastises those who perpetuate this narrative. Granted, since Fox is also a Wiccan insider, her perspective might be similarly dismissed by audiences as biased.

Pagan studies intersects with such stories through the expert advice provided by scholars. Yana Litovsky notes that readers tend to perceive bias in news media, even when bias is not actually present (2021). Therefore, while Pagan leaders try to dispel the narrative put forth by

police, the “hostile media effect” may lead some readers to dismiss these perspectives as biased. Schmitt, Gunther, and Liebhart observe that perceptions of media bias disappear “when the identical information is presented as a student essay” (2004, 638). Scholarship, even a college essay, is perceived by audiences as more neutral. Stories recruiting perspectives from scholars benefit from perceptions that the information provided is reliable and unbiased. *The Guardian* reached out to Gwendolyn Reece, described as “a specialist in contemporary paganism at American University” (Woolf 2015). Reece first counters the Sheriff’s claims that Witchcraft motivated these murders: “If they had done even a modicum of research it would be clear this had nothing to do with paganism,” adding “It’s very irresponsible and highly prejudiced on the part of the sheriff” (Woolf 2015). Although not substantially different from Fox’s comments, Reece carries authority as a specialist in this topic. Reece specifically references research, highlights that the police have no expertise on Paganism (nor sought to consult any experts), and thereby refutes the Sheriff’s claims. Finally, unlike Fox or other Pagan representatives, Reece does not appear to have any personal ties to Paganism, allowing her to represent the cool detachment of scholarship.¹⁹ As is often the case when scholars are quoted by media, Reece does not actually say very much about Paganism. However, news media’s larger reach takes Paganism’s legitimacy beyond academia.²⁰ The destigmatizing perspective that scholars offer, and the media’s broader influence amplifies legitimation.

19. Although Reece is Pagan, this is not mentioned by the story, meaning readers only see her expertise as being based on research.

20. Although Reece only spoke with *The Guardian*, the destigmatization that she provides is amplified as other sources repeat her statements (Radford 2015; Michaelson 2015).

Scholars and the Law

Pagan studies performs legitimation more directly through legal cases. Although scholars testify in court much less frequently than they publish, these instances have a direct impact on practitioners and communities. As evidenced by the grave marker symbols that the US military approved after the pentacle, even when cases only seemingly affect certain people, scholars may help set a new legal precedent or prompt a ripple effect. Unsurprisingly, scholars working in legal contexts is a complex and contentious issue. NRM studies scholars including James R. Lewis, J. Gordon Melton, and Eileen Barker have done considerable public-facing activism on behalf of groups. In contrast, others argue that such scholars are being used by controversial organizations (Kent and Krebs 1998). Critics argue that participating in legal disputes threatens academic integrity for all scholars of religion. This sphere of work therefore extends the debate concerning the appropriateness of advocating on behalf of communities.

Legal disputes also highlight implicit assumptions about the perspectives of scholars. Describing anthropologists who become expert witnesses, Lawrence Rosen writes, “whereas ordinary witnesses were increasingly barred from expressing their own opinions on many issues, various jurisdictions created an exception for the expert witness” (1977, 556). In legal arenas, scholars are again presumed to be objective, and one’s opinion on a topic is accepted as expertise. Although debates in academic circles recognize the importance of identity on shaping one’s research, outside of academia, scholars are accorded a certain level of prestige and objectivity.

When and Why Pagans (and Pagan Studies) Enter the Courtroom

Unfortunately, while serving as legal experts is one of the most tangible instances of legitimation, this area is difficult to examine due to infrequency and privacy. It is rare that scholars are even called upon to do such work (Bolton 1982, 67). Further, scholars' "excessive concern with knowing enough about the subject" (67) prevents many from assisting in cases about which they are consulted. Since legal cases concerning Pagans are especially rare (Beaman 2006, 170), there are even fewer opportunities for Pagan studies scholars to do this work. Finally, since most legal cases remain private or confidential (170), it is difficult to discuss the context of many cases, and the content of what scholars share. Although specific details remain vague, I wish to broadly outline how scholars offer legitimacy.

Scholars working in legal contexts are especially valuable due to mainstream prejudices against NRMs. In one study, participants were asked to evaluate one person's indoctrination process as they joined either the Marines, the Catholic Church, or the Unification Church (more commonly called the 'Moonies') (Pfeifer 1992). Despite participants reading the same description and being instructed to "separate the process" from a group's specific message, many described the process of joining the Moonies as "brainwashing" rather than "resocialization" or "conversion" (536). Simply hearing about affiliation with a marginal religion elicits negative evaluations.

Latent prejudice affects members of NRMs who appear before juries. In another study, mock jurors rated defendants in homicide and sexual assault cases as more guilty "if [they] were associated with a satanic cult than if no cult involvement was indicated" (Pfeifer 1999, 416).²¹ Another study examining negative assessments of NRMs concerned a hypothetical mother

21. This judgement persisted whether the defendant admitted belonging or if affiliation was simply alleged.

seeking to regain child custody (Pfeifer 2014). Participants were told that a mother made significant life improvements in recent years, but also that she belonged to either a church, new age church, cult, or satanic cult (213-4). When affiliated with a cult or satanic cult, participants rated the mother “significantly less competent, weaker, less rational, and less stable” (213). Noting that white jurors’ biases against various ethnic backgrounds have been successfully constrained using standard instructions (Pfeifer and Ogloff 2003), Jeffrey E. Pfeifer suggests that jury cases involving NRMs should also employ standard instructions (2014, 218). Since hearing about affiliation with a new religion activates negative cognitive anchors and delegitimizes individuals, instructions can help to promote less biased evaluations. Although no standardized instructions about Pagans have been implemented, scholars play important roles explaining to parties in legal cases that Pagan affiliation does not necessarily indicate deviance.

In most examples discussed in this section, scholars support Pagans. However, being called to consult does not mean that one necessarily provides positive accounts of Paganism. Luhrmann was asked to advise on a murder case in which the defendant “seemed to have been influenced by chaos magic” and offered the following evaluation: “The books did not cause the murder: they simply gave a somewhat unstable psyche a sense of power in which murder became a reasonable type of action” (1989, 97nn25). While a common refrain in legal settings is “Pagan principles do not condone violence,” Luhrmann indicates that literature and a surrounding community (among other factors) can make particular actions seem reasonable. Recognizing that scholars do not always advocate on behalf of groups is important in light of the accusation that scholars who “defend non-traditional religions against unreasonable persecution” are naïve and gullible at best, and cult apologists, at worst (Lewis 2003, 5). Indeed, Lewis counters that

scholars are perhaps more skeptical than most, lest they be implicated in defending the perpetrators of some future tragic episode.

Although scholars do not always necessarily offer affirming portrayals, the very nature of their recruitment as expert witnesses often places them on one particular side of a case. Expert witnesses are not court-appointed, but rather hand-selected by either defendants or prosecutors (Rosen 1977, 570). This creates a tendency in which scholars support a particular perspective. Clifton shares a story of being asked to be an expert witness in a case about Pagan chaplains. He declined after learning that the state wanted him to advocate that Pagans do not need chaplains, a point with which he disagreed.²² Lewis similarly describes being asked to serve as witness on behalf of another NRM in a kidnapping case (2003, 4). Lewis was consulted due to his research on NRMs, and specifically, challenging the brainwashing narrative, a charge which the organization felt would be used against them in court. Ironically, while cases operate on the presumption that expert witnesses are objective representatives, legal proceedings allow the scholar (and the prosecution or defense) to evaluate whether they agree with a given issue.

Pike's role with the AAR's Committee for the Public Understanding of Religion makes her a particularly prominent, identifiable person concerned with advocating on behalf of religious freedom. Other scholars note that they are contacted by attorneys or communities, who often discover them through directories created by universities for both media and legal outreach. These directories again reinforce that scholars are consulted in legal arenas due to a recognized position as experts on a given topic, but also that legal teams have agency to recruit favourable perspectives.

22. Chas Clifton, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

From formal laws to implicit presumptions, Paganism does not garner the same respect in the eyes of the law as other religions.²³ Individual Pagans often see their religious affiliation negatively impact custody hearings. In such cases, scholars can offer legitimation by corroborating a Pagan's arguments or refuting claims against Pagans. In child custody cases for instance, one parent may claim that another belongs to a devil-worshipping cult with deviant sexual rituals, making that person an unfit parent. The accused would likely defend themselves by claiming that Paganism is not dangerous or deviant, and that in their coven, the Great Rite is symbolically re-enacted (not physically performed).²⁴ In such a case, many people, including the defendant, their friends, or local representatives of the religion would likely offer testimony. Scholars simply represent one class of figures who are knowledgeable about Paganism. The expertise of scholars is bolstered by the perception of scholars as detached observers. Scholars might support one party in the above case by corroborating that Wiccans do not worship Satan (or that people who worship Satan are not inherently deviant), that the Great Rite is indeed sometimes symbolically performed, and that many Wiccans raise children in healthy homes. Scholars root these arguments in their own ethnographic observations or other research about Pagans.

The very suggestion of Pagan affiliation often prejudices cases against Pagans (Hutton 2011a, 236). Beaman discusses two sexual assault cases in which the accused's alleged Pagan affiliations were "noted as appropriate (negative) evidence" about their character (2006, 173).

23. Concerning the broader context of anti-Pagan legal prejudice, it bears mentioning that Witchcraft was formerly outlawed in Britain and Canada (Beaman 2006, 164-5). As recently as 1987, Canadian Supreme Court decisions suggested, "the accused knows full well that she has no basis for her claim to be able to predict what will happen in people's futures" (166). Such decisions delegitimized Paganism by upholding presumptions that magic is not real.

24. The Great Rite is a ritual in Paganism that can sometimes involve sexual intercourse between a man and women. Although in some cases this ritual involves penetrative sex between two parties, it is far more common to symbolize this interaction by plunging a dagger into a chalice. Defendants could also note that if the Great Rite is literally performed, all participants are consenting adults.

Merely suggesting Pagan affiliation “serve[s] to reinforce the popular tendency to confuse Wicca with Satan worship, or other vaguely sinister ‘occult’ practices” (173). Describing how scholars counteract this prejudice, Hutton shares, “the defence team . . . call[s] in people like me as expert witnesses to reassure the jury that Paganism did not itself predispose its followers to misbehaviour” (2019a, 249). Referencing the Florida murders discussed earlier, Reece notes that she had no idea whether the suspect was guilty. When speaking with media however, her primary concern was dismantling the assumption that murder is part of Wiccan practices.²⁵ In legal contexts, most scholars do not provide alibis or praise someone’s character, but rather assert that affiliation does not predispose one to deviance.

Two cases involving child custody further outline how Pagans are often delegitimized, and how scholars generally combat stigmatization. *Ryan v. Ryan* involved a Catholic mother and a father with interests in Rosicrucianism. The Court prohibited “the father from interfering with the Catholic mother’s right to raise the child in her religious tradition,” and ordered that the father neither “introduce . . . nor encourage” any outside “religious or philosophical influences” (Beaman 2006, 171).²⁶ *Gay v. Kingston* similarly concerned a mother objecting to a father having access to their child, accusing his Wiccan beliefs of being a negative influence (171). Revealing the anti-Pagan prejudice at play, “The Court stated: ‘To some, the very name conjures visions of a satanic cult performing bloody rituals’” (171). Despite this initial delegitimation, the court heard evidence regarding the father’s religion. He explained that although Wiccans call themselves Witches, he has never been involved in (nor seen) any “controversial” activities (171). He also acknowledged that he performs spells, but likened these to ““more conventional

25. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

26. Critiquing the Court’s Christian-centric reasoning, Beaman adds, “The Court was concerned that the father might introduce the child to beliefs that might frighten him, without consideration for the fact that many children find references to . . . burning in Hell for all eternity, frightening” (171).

religious services,” drawing comparisons to Hinduism and First Nations communities (171). In both cases, Paganism was automatically assumed to be deviant or dangerous. While the father spoke on his own behalf in the second case, he highlights the type of testimony that scholars generally offer.

Courtroom Challenges

One major struggle that scholars express is balancing nuance with the law’s demand for clear declarations. Rosen writes, “categories that courts might regard as conclusory, social scientists might see as shorthand formulations, general glosses, or purposely ambiguous rubrics covering details that cannot be summed up as categorical responses” (1977, 566). Reflecting on one case, Pike shares, “almost every time they asked me a question, I would say ‘well, not all Pagans agree on this.’ You know? It’s really difficult when they want a yes or no answer. ‘Do Pagans believe blah, blah, blah?’ ‘Well, some do and some don’t.’”²⁷ Although elsewhere I have critiqued how scholars reify ideal types to legitimize Paganism, the specific contexts and high stakes of legal spaces may require different approaches than traditional scholarship. Court cases are a context which often demands clear-cut boundaries. In this arena, scholars can best perform their roles by clearly explaining to audiences (who generally lack religious studies backgrounds) why Paganism is a typical (and not inherently dangerous) religion.

The dominance of Christianity in North America also shapes how religion is understood, constraining how scholars speak about religion in court (Barner-Barry 2005, 10). Explaining how this affects scholars, Pike explains, “They kept trying to frame it as you might frame Judaism or

27. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

Christianity or Islam. ‘Well, what are the ... central things that a Pagan needs to practice their religion?’ ‘Well, it depends.’”²⁸ This parallels the father above, who helped other parties make sense of his religious practices by drawing comparisons to more mainstream religions. Pike recounts another experience in which “the opposing attorney kept trying to make me be conclusive,” to which she could only reply, “it depends on the person and their own identity.”²⁹ Lack of orthodoxy and orthopraxy are sometimes disadvantages when Pagans fight for their religious freedom, and challenge scholars who must force Paganism into narrow frameworks.

As when speaking with media, a related frustration of court cases is lacking control over one’s statements. Bolton writes, “the historian can determine what he will say, but he cannot control exactly how his testimony will be used or if it will be used” (1982, 66). Pike explains, “some of my statements could potentially be used against someone I wanted to support. Once you enter the legal arena, the processes of the law take over ... it can be quite uncomfortable to find one’s words used in an opposite way than intended.”³⁰ Scholarship’s ongoing dialogue is not possible in legal contexts. A lawyer may misconstrue a statement, and scholars may not get a chance for rebuttal. Further, the stakes of a prosecutor twisting one’s words to secure a conviction are much higher than a colleague disagreeing with claims made in a conference presentation. Finally, unlike traditional academic debates, in which opinions may shift over time, groups and individuals must live with a legal decision for years to come (Rosen 1977). These factors reinforce that trials are a thoroughly different world with which scholars engage. Although their research training and expertise grants them recognition to enter and speak as

28. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, September 26, 2019.

29. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, June 7, 2020.

30. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, June 7, 2020.

experts in these spaces, legal cases force scholars to conceptualize their work in different and, at times, challenging ways.

Other Forms of Legal Advocacy

One final way that scholars facilitate legitimation involves preventing Pagans from even appearing before courts. Magliocco was asked to attend a town hall meeting between the Los Angeles Police Department and local Pagans. This meeting was part of a broader community policing initiative in which LAPD sought to learn about different religious communities, their practices, and needs. Paraphrasing the types of questions that officers asked, Magliocco shares, ““What are your needs, for example ... when you are practising in a park?””³¹ Pagans appearing nude, in robes, or with daggers in a public park at night, might lead to angry neighbours requesting police intervention. Magliocco adds, “if the police have the wrong information about you, or the wrong stereotypes, we’ve seen how that goes.”³² The educational session in question ideally helps police be more informed about what is actually occurring, and how to respond appropriately.

These sessions could also potentially inform police investigations. Magliocco explains, “If they were doing a murder investigation...they might want to know about things that appear on a Witch’s altar, and that for example, an athame is not a weapon ... It’s not used for any of the things that people typically, uh, have stereotypes around daggers.”³³ This specific meeting is part of a broader pattern of scholars informing police and other government agencies. Arthur

31. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

32. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

33. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020. While athames have the potential to be used as weapons, greater knowledge about Wiccan rituals and tools lets investigators recognize that this dagger is not generally (if ever) used for violence, allowing the investigation to continue unobstructed by incriminating misperceptions.

shares that during the events in Waco, Texas, surrounding the Branch Davidians, scholars including Cathy Wessinger and Eileen Barker pleaded with FBI and ATF to handle their approach in a different manner. Although scholars in that instance were unsuccessful in persuading state bodies to alter their approach, Arthur shares that since then, “FBI have come to the AAR to talk to people both in New Religious Movements and contemporary Pagan studies, about how to interact with folks and what to expect and this sort of thing.”³⁴ Information sessions give law enforcement greater awareness of what groups, beliefs, and practices they may encounter, allowing them to make better assessments if and when they approach these groups.

Returning to the information session with the LAPD, I should note that Magliocco did not organize this meeting, but rather was asked by local Pagans to participate. Recalling what Pagans told police at the meeting’s conclusion, Magliocco shares, ““If you have any questions, contact Sabina. We trust her to tell you the truth about us. You can contact her. She’s a professor ... She’ll talk you through this if you have any questions.””³⁵ This praise highlights the key role that scholars play as conduits. In the eyes of the police, it is irrelevant that Magliocco is also a Pagan. Pagans tell police that they can trust her because she is a professor.³⁶ Discussing conscience constituents in social movements, Nicholas Owen argues, one’s “status as disinterested non-beneficiaries can make them honest brokers in resolving intra-group conflict” (2019, 2). Perceptions of scholars as disinterested, detached, and objective renders them honest knowledge brokers, empowering scholars to liaise with different authorities and advocate on

34. Shawn Arthur, interview with Chris Miller, February 13, 2020.

35. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

36. Recalling the careful balancing that scholars in this field must often conduct, although police do not care whether or not Magliocco is a practitioner, it is possible that her positionality contributed to this Pagan community selecting her (as opposed to other scholars) to be the scholar present at this meeting.

behalf of Pagans. The state trusts what Magliocco shares about Pagans due to her profession and credentials.

Academics as Advocates?

The religious identity of Pagans renders members marginal in certain contexts. This offers opportunities for scholars in this field to perform legitimation. One concrete form of legitimacy are chaplains in public institutions. Although established chaplains mostly result from the efforts of Pagan activists, scholars assist by educating others about Pagans' needs, or supporting Pagan credentialing institutions. Scholars also legitimize Pagan identities by serving as consultants. Media occasionally consult scholars for stories about Pagans, affording opportunities for scholars to correct misperceptions, promote positive portrayals, and broadcast these perspectives to wider audiences than their research typically reaches. Another form of consulting occurs through legal disputes. While these opportunities are rarer, by informing judges, juries, and the wider public that Paganism is a legitimate religion (whose members should not be discriminated against), scholars help Pagans secure certain rights.

All of the examples of outreach discussed in this chapter demonstrate applications for research beyond the academy. However, while this type of work is different than one's teaching or research, such work nonetheless intersects with academia. Scholars are consulted because they are recognized as experts on a particular topic. The growth of Pagan studies as a field allows scholars to become specialists in this area and still find employment, and enables media and courts, among other bodies, to recognize these scholars as experts. Growth and recognition of this field therefore facilitates more concrete legitimation than can be accomplished through traditional research. Further, scholars being recognized as experts means that their perspectives

might carry more weight, or be freer from perceptions of biases, than statements from a community member. That the perspectives offered by scholars are bolstered due to the recognition of their credentials reinforces how the various strands of legitimation — internal, external, and academic — are interconnected.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

Any issues that my research highlights are not necessarily unique to Pagan studies. As Davidsen notes in closing his essay that criticizes the field, “If this analysis . . . sounds familiar, it is probably because similar problems, in stronger or weaker measures, are present in most of the fields that make up the academic study of religion” (2012, 195). Though I recognize that I single out this sub-field, I highlight Pagan studies because it resembles other fields, thereby offering a case study to analyze broader issues in detail.

Recalling the two lines of inquiry guiding my exploration – how fields emerge and how they interact with communities – Pagan studies first reveals insights which can benefit other emergent fields. Starting as a handful of graduate students presenting research scattered across academic associations, Pagan studies highlights paths that new fields generally follow. As a common starting point, conferences permit knowledge dissemination and facilitate interactions between scholars pursuing new avenues for research. As publications emerge, specific knowledge claims – or more generally, the idea that studying this new topic is a valuable pursuit – spread to larger audiences. Eventually, formal research hubs develop, including large

associations forming a dedicated unit, publishers supporting a dedicated journal, or scholars collaborating to produce edited volumes. These hubs further increase visibility and the perceived legitimacy of a topic.

Teaching is another important form of academic knowledge dissemination. As students learn about Pagans in courses, they discover that this community exists and encounter specific claims about Paganism, which legitimizes certain perspectives about or within the religion. Teaching intersects with published research, as an article about Wicca in an edited volume on women's spirituality, for example, fills one week on the syllabus of an introductory "Women and Religion" course. Beyond broad survey courses, some scholars who specialize in studying Pagans also convince administrators to offer courses that devote a semester's worth of focus to this community.

In terms of institutionalization, Pagan studies has stalled at this point. There is a conference unit, a journal, and several dozen courses devoted to this subject matter. However, Pagan studies still lacks the chairs, degree programs, and formal departments of more established fields. Despite its partial progress in this respect, Pagan studies offers a roadmap for fields that are navigating institutionalization in academia, highlighting strategies to succeed and pitfalls to avoid.

Concerning my second guiding question – how fields interact with their topic of study – Pagan studies can inform both new and established fields. Scholars and Pagans overlap at para-academic conferences, seminaries, classrooms, or out in the field. At times, academic rigor is sometimes subverted to serve community interests. Communities can shape their image in particular ways and individuals can assert particular normative claims. At the very least, grey areas often emerge concerning what constitutes appropriate scholarship. These issues and

debates are hardly unique to this area of study. This analysis of Pagan studies can therefore highlight issues which are applicable in other fields, such as other religions which get labelled as the fastest growing or the ways that other communities are explored in classrooms. Further, since many scholars are Pagans, this field is also a venue to explore the ongoing insider/outsider debate. Although, within the contexts of this debate, most academic fields have historically considered insiders to be less reliable, Pagan studies highlights a new perspective, in which belonging becomes advantageous.

This project also uncovered specific ways by which scholars can legitimize groups. Sometimes this happens simply through exposure, as a group or idea being represented in scholarship can connote validity. Other forms of legitimation are implicit. Declaring that a community embodies certain perspectives can position that group in a particular way, reinforce practitioners' self-perceptions, and shape how outsiders perceive that group. In rare cases, scholars occupy more explicit roles as advocates, through news articles that dispel stereotypes, or testifying in court about whether one's religion makes someone likely to be dangerous. In addition to outlining ways by which scholars offer legitimacy for groups, this project also reveals tensions over such issues as when it is acceptable to advocate, or how to balance informants' preferences with critical analysis.

That scholars sometimes assume more explicit roles of advocacy complicates a broader debate in religious studies. A common critique is that scholars of religion must critically examine their subject(s) and remain as objective or neutral as possible. In the words of Russell McCutcheon, scholars should be critics not caretakers (2001). Bruce Lincoln similarly argues that scholars who do not critically interrogate subjects, or separate "truth" from "truth-claims," fail to fulfill their roles as scholars (2005, 10). "In that moment," Lincoln adds, "a variety of

roles are available: some perfectly respectable (amanuensis, collector, friend and advocate), and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however, should be confused with scholarship” (10).

McCutcheon and Lincoln – two of the more vocal critics of advocacy in religious studies – frame a broader discourse concerning appropriate approaches for scholars. Pagan studies scholars fall on both sides of this debate, occasionally situating their work against this wider backdrop. Berry notes, “one of my main criticisms of many groups in the AAR is that they’re too theological. That they’re taking a cheerleader or a voyeur perspective,” adding, “I definitely don’t want that to happen with Pagan studies.”¹ Discussing the relationship between his work and Pagan legitimacy, Berry references Lincoln specifically: “if you wanna be a cheerleader, that’s fine. You wanna be a voyeur, that’s your business. But that’s not what I do. And it’s not how I understand the academic study of religion.”² Arthur similarly invokes McCutcheon to argue that scholars should move beyond their data and critically interrogate their informants’ beliefs and perspectives (2013, 170). Cusack also invokes Lincoln when describing her work, explaining, “I don’t cheerlead.”³ Even when not naming or referencing specific critics, scholars in this field frequently draw on the language of advocacy to debate appropriate boundaries. Hale asks, for example, whether scholars are “guilty of representing Paganism too favorably under the influence of latent advocacy” (2013, 153). Since Pagan studies is an emergent field still trying to build its reputation, many scholars suggest that too much advocacy can hurt the perceived legitimacy of this scholarly domain.

1. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

2. Damon Berry, interview with Chris Miller, February 7, 2020.

3. Carole M. Cusack, interview with Chris Miller, September 20, 2019.

In contrast, some figures in Pagan studies reject the outlooks of those scholars supporting the critical study of religion. Bado, for instance, argues that McCutcheon, Davidsen, and other like-minded critics impose dichotomous Western thinking into scholarship (2013, 123-4). Other scholars note the benefits that can emerge from writing about the community from a sympathetic standpoint (Berger 2015, 131). As explored throughout this project, many other scholars use their research to advocate for Paganism in more implicit ways, such as offering favourable definitions of core Pagan values.

The co-existence of multiple perspectives on critical versus sympathetic or supportive approaches first highlights the impossibility of determining good (or even appropriate) scholarship. Granted, in certain spaces (the CCPS or NAASR, for instance), popular opinion may tilt in favour of a more supportive or more critical approach. However, given the many institutions, disciplines, fields, conferences, and publications in which scholars situate their work, it is unlikely that there will ever be unanimous agreement concerning how critical of an approach is desirable, or what degree of advocacy is acceptable. Any criticisms which I raise in this project should therefore be nuanced by acknowledging that there is no consensus concerning what is best for Pagan studies (or any field). Any criticisms that I raise are not meant to dismiss this entire field, or even specific scholars. My work merely intends to highlight how scholarship performs legitimation, and occasionally, offer suggestions for how certain approaches in the field could be refashioned to more closely align with a particular school of thought. However, whether these suggestions are even deemed necessary is clearly still a matter of some debate.

If scholars have not yet determined what sort of stance or approach is acceptable in such traditional forums as peer-reviewed publications, then the alternative venues that scholars enter make debates over advocacy even murkier. Although Lincoln separates advocacy from fulfilling

the proper role of scholarship, examples discussed in this project, and chapter 8 in particular, challenge this argument. Some scholars point to scenarios that require scholars to become advocates. Reflecting on her decision to speak with media following the Florida murders, Reece explains, “on the one hand, there’s a distinction between scholarship and advocacy, and on the other hand, when you have something that is both false and dangerous ... it becomes more like a public health situation.”⁴ Since there was no evidence supporting the existence of violent rituals in Wicca, Reece felt compelled to dispel certain false assumptions. Further, because the police in this case publicly endorsed a deceptive claim about Wicca, this defendant saw their religious affiliation potentially implicate their guilt. The safety of local Pagans was also potentially threatened by police stoking the fires of suspicion. Reece adds that since Florida “has the ability to yield state sanctioned violence ... you also then have an ethical obligation to call attention to that.”⁵ Reece recognizes that in this instance, she advocated for a religion, but explains that numerous factors justify this stance. Reece endorses a notion which she calls “responsible advocacy,” adding, “scholars should take some of those stances where they see systems that are oppressive, and [advocate] for the purposes of the public good.”⁶ Those who study particular communities are both more aware of injustices against certain groups, and better placed to advocate for change.

The role of scholars as public intellectuals further complicates discussions of advocacy in academia. Describing her willingness to respond to media inquiries, Magliocco suggests, “as researchers, we are also public intellectuals, and we have an ethical obligation to engage with the public and to educate the public.”⁷ Similarly, Pike shares, “I am committed to the free exercise of

4. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

5. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

6. Gwendolyn Reece, interview with Chris Miller, July 1, 2020.

7. Sabina Magliocco, interview with Chris Miller, June 18, 2020.

religion and opposed to the establishment of one religion that is then used to judge all others. It is my duty as a scholar to speak to a broader public, especially in the case of marginalized and demonized religions.”⁸ Granted, not every scholar considers public intellectualism to be their duty or responsibility. Further, numerous pitfalls explain why some scholars do not participate in this venue for scholarship. However, working from their desire to inform broader audiences, some scholars use their expertise to ensure that more people can safely practice their religion, free from discrimination.

In contrast, some scholars dispute the suggestion that all scholars are also public intellectuals, and criticize any attempt to intertwine scholarship and advocacy. Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs, two scholars who are particularly critical of scholars weighing in on NRMs in media or court write, “some of the most respected scholars involved in the academic study of religion have let down their guards, and groups with agendas have only been too willing to draw them in. A consequence of this is that these scholars provide support for ideologies” (1998, 16). Suggesting that speaking about religious communities in these non-traditional venues amounts to supporting ideologies, these scholars reveal a particularly deep aversion to any form of public intellectual work. Another proponent of the critical study of religion, Donald Wiebe, pushes back against the suggestion that scholars be obligated to become public intellectuals, arguing that assuming this role may even “put the academic credibility of this discipline into question” (2005, 8). Even accepting the difference between traditional and more public venues in which scholars speak, some figures clearly oppose the idea that scholars would ever weigh in on religious issues, instead prioritizing the role of detached critical analyst.

8. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, June 7, 2020.

Much like the insider/outsider debate, the most polarizing perspectives are helpful to frame the discussion, but are much less common on the ground. For many, the relationship between scholarship and advocacy is ambiguous. Closing the volume dedicated to *Triumph of the Moon*'s twentieth anniversary, Hutton reflects, "Some readers may wonder if I have departed from my accustomed role as a historian for one as an advocate, . . . I would resist that suggestion, on the grounds that having written the history of a particular phenomenon I feel able to extend that into a consideration of its present condition and nature, suggesting its shortcoming as well as its strengths" (2019a, 253). Even coming from a scholar who performs the work of informing judges, prison officials, police, or media about Pagans, this quote reveals some resistance to his work being interpreted as advocacy. Similarly, Pike explains, "I haven't really taken on the role of activist, but have tried to support activists."⁹ In other words, Pike sees herself as facilitating activism, by educating those in power about the needs of Pagans, or by speaking about Pagans to the media, but she does not readily adopt the title of activist.

Although some scholars separate their work from the label of advocacy, arguing that Pagan affiliation should not justify prejudice against a defendant is in fact advocating for Paganism. Such a scholar is declaring that Paganism is a legitimate religion and is not inherently dangerous. Granted, this may not seem like a radical statement. However, considering that there are people who suggest otherwise, from police sheriffs and prison officials to the proverbial person in the street, such claims become a form of advocacy.

Contention over the appropriateness of advocacy raises issues that Pagan studies will likely need to consider as the field continues to develop. Paganism's consistent marginalization in legal contexts, or society's fascination with witchcraft in October, means that scholars will

9. Sarah M. Pike, interview with Chris Miller, June 7, 2020.

continually have opportunities to perform roles as expert consultants in some capacity or another. Some scholars may be wary of taking on a role that they believe might be conflated with advocacy. Similarly, some scholars might be willing to assume such roles, but feel themselves unprepared to do so. Seeking to manage the perception of this emergent field, some scholars may even avoid such work lest criticisms of “what is wrong with Pagan studies” recirculate.

Writing in the 1970s about scholarly intersections with legal disputes, Rosen writes, “lack of communication within and beyond anthropology has inhibited the recognition of common problems and the development of potential reforms” (1977, 573). At present, there is still work to be done in terms of coordinating and preparing scholars of religion to assume public intellectual roles. Groups like the AAR’s Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion do important work in this arena, liaising with government organizations and media networks, and training scholars on how to work with these bodies. Many schools also have media outreach specialists who train scholars for media consultation. More conversations among scholars in Pagan studies might strengthen the field’s ability to legitimize Pagans in cases where this need is especially dire, while still maintaining the reputation of a field that conducts critical analysis.

These alternative spaces in which scholars speak are obviously distinct from more traditional forms of scholarship, yet are arguably still an important extension of scholarship. Building on the knowledge about Pagans that one has acquired through their research, scholars can facilitate important outcomes for the communities that they study. Magliocco’s discussion of the multiple publics that scholars address is especially helpful in understanding the distinctions that scholars must at times navigate. When speaking in a courtroom, for example, it might be useful to cite the Wiccan rede and argue that Witches are not inherently violent. For this audience, the nuance of how binding or broadly applicable this belief is seems neither necessary

nor relevant. However, when scholars speak to an academic audience, there is sufficient space for nuance. One can say, for instance, that while the Wiccan rede is a common precept, there are nonetheless instances of violence and abuse in Wicca and other traditions. As public intellectuals, many scholars play important roles advocating for the religious freedoms of this minority religion. As this field continues to develop, a useful topic of conversation might concern how to describe Pagan beliefs, practices, identities, and communities in the multiple arenas in which scholars are asked to operate. If scholars in this field develop a more public voice, it could even potentially increase the general awareness of Pagan studies, and in that way, promote further growth. This again highlights the interconnections between the spheres of legitimacy this project explores.

Sites for Comparison

I hope that this analysis of a single sub-field can inform studies of similar issues in both emergent and established areas of study. Academic fields are shaped by the contexts in which they emerge (Allen 1993, 4). Pagan studies, for instance, looks the way that it does because it largely emerged in North America and Britain, and was propelled by scholars trained in anthropology, sociology, and religious studies. Despite this field's unique development, colleagues frequently advised me that similarities might exist between Pagan studies and other fields. Although there was insufficient space to thoroughly analyze all of the similarities that I encountered, I wish to use this conclusion to identify some connections.

Many other sub-fields dedicated to smaller religions have a meagre academic presence, but lack formal or widespread establishment. Sikh or Baha'i studies for example, are both represented by AAR program units. Some schools even host institutes or programs dedicated to

Zoroastrian, Sikh, or Jain studies. While such fields may have dedicated journals, like *The Pomegranate*, these lack the reach of more mainstream journals. Finally, while certain schools might offer a course on Sikhism, this is hardly a staple of religious studies departments, reflecting instead the research interests of particular faculty. Marginal religions have some representation in academia, but lack the ubiquitous presence of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for example. Most of the fields studying these groups are at similar states of institutionalization, and likely share many of the same challenges as Pagan studies.

Jewish and Islamic studies are two fields that have established quite large presences, through courses, journals, conferences, departments, and chairs. Although the private donations that have supported the growth of these fields may never materialize in Pagan studies, developments in these fields represent goalposts for emergent fields. Jewish studies in the US, for example, grew from roughly 250 faculty teaching courses in the 1970s to 1,000 faculty positions and 150 endowed chairs by 2001 (Schmalzbauer and Mahoney 2018, 48). Islamic studies similarly grew from a handful of professional associations in the mid-twentieth century to at present, many centres at major schools (48). These fields demonstrate that discourses can grow from loosely affiliated scholars to formal organizations. Eventually, these topics became mainstays at many religious studies departments.

Despite their growth, these established fields are still shaped by debates over how scholarship can or should legitimize communities. Hughes describes one colleague's impression of Jewish studies, namely, that it "tended to be peopled largely by Jews who studied their own religious tradition in a rather self-congratulatory and apologetic manner" (2013, 1). For this colleague, "Jewish studies represents all that is wrong with the academic study of religion: too introspective, too ethnic, too navel-gazing, and too willing to reify or essentialize data that it not

unproblematically constructs as ‘Jewish’” (3). Due to the historic otherness of Jews, Hughes explains that this field “has largely been bound up with the apologetical desire to show that Jews and Judaism were normal” (39). Similar debates over the appropriate uses of critical analysis also play out in Islamic studies (Berg 2012; Hughes 2012). Pagan studies is therefore hardly anomalous with respect to the accusations of advocacy this field has faced, or simply trying to normalize a community that is often marginalized or misunderstood.

Hughes also notes that due to a lack of interest from institutions, the scholarly study of Judaism “developed outside of the university” (2013, 60). In certain respects, Pagan studies has also partly developed outside of the academy. From *The Pomegranate*’s first incarnation and early AAR pre-meetings, or even at present, Cherry Hill Seminary, popular publishing, and para-academic conferences, Pagans are keen to study their community from an academic perspective. Despite these concerted commitments to studying Paganism however, Pagan studies still lacks the formal institutions which Jewish studies managed to develop. Commenting recently on the state of the field, Hutton writes, “when all has been said about the healthy state of Pagan Studies, it remains true that there is no university department yet dedicated to them, no institutional research centre and no established professorial chair” (2019a, 250). In light of this observation, one must also consider “the critical weakness of Paganism at the end of the 2010s . . . [in which] nobody in a position of real power or influence is openly on its side” (250). Academic fields are shaped by economic and political power. Chairs dedicated to specific traditions often reflect the economic influence of private donors. Although many scholars and Pagans have forged their own outlets for research, Pagan studies lacks (and will likely continue to lack) the same degree of private funding that supports larger fields.

Granted, the private funding that supports chairs in Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, or even Mormon studies also produces concerns over donors supporting particular perspectives. The programs, professorships, conferences, and journals that private interests sponsor allow community members to legitimize particular configurations of religious identity. Given that establishing a chair can cost millions of dollars, this makes it unlikely that there will ever be a “Chair of Pagan Studies” at one institution. While this poses challenges to establishing or enlarging the field, this may also be positive, as knowledge production is less constrained by private interests.

Another sub-field that offers apt comparisons is Asian American studies, which established its first program in 1969 (Arthur 2009a, 79), growing to nearly forty US programs by the 2000s (Chang 1999, 181). Initially, community activism helped advocate for academic attention, eventually “trickl[ing] over” to schools establishing courses or programs (186). Despite some growth, the field has failed to become “fully institutionalized” (Arthur 2009a, 83). Although again, Asian American studies represents a much larger population with more wealthy donors willing to fund programs, this state of affairs or being stalled in development offers some parallels to Pagan studies. Highlighting which programs become most successful, Chang notes the importance of avoiding “intense open conflicts” with larger academic structures (1999, 189). If Pagan studies scholars are seeking guidance on how to best grow or survive in academia, this reinforces the importance of replicating traditional academic standards.

Further comparisons reside in women and gender studies. Like most other fields listed above, women and gender studies is more firmly established than Pagan studies, as roughly 40% of US colleges offer degrees and almost 75% offer courses in this area (Arthur 2009a, 78). However, these fields are similar in that they are both relatively recent entrants in academia.

Many Pagan studies scholars had their intellectual upbringing in gender studies, and many scholars continue to embrace feminist methods and perspectives. Both fields also study inherently flexible topics. Originating as women's studies in the mid-twentieth century, this field continually incorporates new subjects (83). Now often labelled gender studies, scholars might study the experiences of women, LGBTQ+ folks, or family dynamics. Pagan studies has similarly grown by bringing new groups under the field's purview. Although expanding data helps fields grow, the contentious position of men's issues in gender studies, for instance, reveals how expansion may be a contested process (Justad 2008). These tensions offer parallels with the way that Pagan studies may seek to integrate more traditions into the field.

Both Pagan and gender studies are also shaped by activist approaches. Women's studies began as a discourse critiquing higher education and eventually developed into a field in its own right (Allen 1993, 2). Women's studies also strives to transform how knowledge is constructed and to destabilize boundaries separating scholarship and politics (Arthur 2009a, 82). Many Pagan studies scholars similarly seek to challenge traditional knowledge structures, or explore new approaches to scholarship in their research. As discussed, innovative approaches sometimes result in critiques of the field, an issue that women or gender studies similarly navigates.

One final area studies field that partly resembles Pagan studies is Black studies. Again, both fields emerged fairly recently, and both adopt interdisciplinary approaches.¹⁰ Fabio Rojas calls Black studies a "permanent interdiscipline" or "highly developed but not completely self-contained intellectual community" (2005, 21). This creates such challenges as porous boundaries, developing field-wide agendas, and communicating with other fields. All are issues faced by Pagan studies and many other interdisciplinary fields.

10. Like women's studies and Pagan studies, Black studies scholars also often share identities with their informants and adopt activist approaches.

Granted, comparisons between Pagan and Black or gender studies can only go so far. Groups with more serious experiences of marginalization have more overlap with protest movements and receive considerably more financial support (Kennedy and Beins 2005; Rooks 2006; Rojas 2007; Arthur 2009a). This leads to such fields having a larger academic presence. Regardless of these key differences, similar concerns shape these fields. Black and gender studies have both seen their academic legitimacy questioned. Fields devoted to marginal communities are often (perhaps unfairly) more prone to accusations of failing to meet the same standards as older, more traditional fields. Rooks argues that Black studies is still seen as a utilitarian means “to ensure a comfortable social space for the institution’s Black students, or at worst, as glorified affirmative action programs useful for ensuring an easy ride for unqualified Black students” (2006, 8). This field also faces criticisms of advocacy assuming too great a role in scholarship. The success of Black studies, in spite of these criticisms, reveals that a field’s survival is connected to managing impressions and perceptions.

While direct comparisons between fields should not be oversimplified, the fields identified above (and likely many more) can hopefully still inform one another. Area studies fields that are well established reveal pathways and pitfalls that Pagan studies scholars may wish to observe. Similarly, as a field still in the process of institutionalization, Pagan studies reveals patterns of how academic fields legitimize outlooks. To some degree, the fields described above have already cemented certain choices, such that these once contingent possibilities now seem inevitable. In Pagan studies, still in the midst of its early development, the types of decisions being made, and the motivations behind each one, are laid more bare. Observations of patterns in Pagan studies can inform these larger fields, which may be so firmly established that such trends go unnoticed.

Pagan studies might also helpfully inform fields which are less institutionalized. Scholars who study graffiti and street art offer one helpful example. Jeffrey Ian Ross et al. highlight struggles that scholars have faced, including finding venues to share research and addressing students' and colleagues' misperceptions (2017). A collection of scholars studying this topic only emerged in the 1960s. Even then, scholars encountered “academic resistance” (Dundes 1966; Lomas 1973). Once scholars found greater acceptance, scholars still struggled to find cohesive hubs, with papers presented sporadically across conferences, and entire panels or sessions being “virtually non-existent” (Ross et al. 2017, 412-3). Graffiti studies has thus far been driven by postdocs, PhD candidates, and students (413, nn4), demographics which mirror Pagan studies during the 1990s. Lack of senior scholars results in fewer resources, less security, and fewer connections to colleagues, making it harder to publish, promote research, establish hubs, or be taken seriously. Since graffiti studies has only recently seen thematic conferences and panels within larger conferences, Pagan studies might helpfully reveal how mailing lists, friendships, and strategically navigating organizations are key to building formal hubs.

Graffiti studies also shares issues constructing courses and lacking a widely accepted canon for syllabi. Mirroring those Pagan studies scholars who have clashed with their departments to establish courses, scholars must also occasionally convince administrators (or students) that graffiti is not simply a criminal activity (414). Just as who exactly counts as Pagan is occasionally contested, another challenge in graffiti studies is “elasticity of terms” and struggles to clearly define subject matter (416). Finally, graffiti studies shares identity issues, of scholars who are practitioners and some who “came to the initial realization that they could pursue graffiti or street art as scholarly topics by reading published works” (417). The demographics of graffiti studies supports that academic fields often validate insider perspectives.

As a consequence of these demographics however, scholars often face assumptions that someone writing about this topic must be a fan of this art form, “and therefore unable to write in a critical manner” (417). I highlight graffiti studies simply because it is one field where, comparatively, Pagan studies has a greater degree of institutionalization. Pagan studies has certainly not eradicated or addressed all of the issues outlined above. As discussed, reflecting on the terms that scholars use or even what groups get classified as Pagan, and establishing a more coherent curricula for teaching Pagan studies are two important issues that this field can address moving forward. However, since both fields are currently addressing similar conversations, fruitful insights might emerge if they are in dialogue. While similarities may not be instantly apparent, Pagan studies can inform other emergent fields (and vice versa) on navigating such issues as building hubs, defining data, and positioning identity.

Where to Go From Here?

Having outlined the contributions of my research and pointing to some areas that my work can inform, it is also worth noting what I did not cover. One limitation of this study is my focus on North America. Although I connected with scholars from Britain and Australia, and examine publications that discuss Pagans across the world, I primarily address Pagan studies in Canada and the United States. This neglects the robust presence of Pagan studies in Britain, and its emergence in Eastern Europe. Examining these areas might reveal differences in how colleagues perceive Pagan studies, or how the field exists in such organizations as the British Association for the Study of Religion. Similarly, the para-academic conferences that I examine have parallels in such organizations as the Centre for Pagan Studies, based in Britain. Further

research examining the growth and development of Pagan studies in different locales or a cross-comparative analysis would reveal if or how North America resembles other contexts.

A further limitation derives from the borders that I constructed around Pagan studies. Western esoteric studies represents an adjacent sub-field that I could not explore in sufficient depth. Similar to Pagan studies, this field is both historical (examining the roots of esoteric thought across cultures) and contemporary (exploring how practitioners integrate practices and ideas at present), and also highly interdisciplinary. This field is more firmly established than Pagan studies, with specific associations, chairs, and even a specific concentration for students at Rice University. Although these fields are distinct, they overlap at certain points, such as scholars presenting research about Pagans at the annual meeting of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism. While scholars have briefly addressed the relationship between these fields (Hale 2013), research exploring the development of esoteric studies, the place of Paganism within esoteric studies, or a cross-comparative analysis could build on my research.

A further area of analysis concerns Pagan opinions towards the field. I briefly address Pagan reactions to scholarship through blogs, accounts from scholars, and speaking with scholars who are also Pagans. I avoided interviewing non-academic Pagans directly, since alerting them to a field of research that they might otherwise be uninterested in would taint the data. Future research could engage non-academic Pagans more directly, assessing awareness of the field, or perhaps even presenting a given article, then asking Pagans for their feedback. Such a project might need to untangle issues of creating awareness where none existed before, but would produce more insights on what Pagans actually think of research, how research shapes identities, and how Pagans use research.

Finally, any history of a field gradually becomes outdated. Over the last several years, I have seen the field transform. Although I may criticize certain gaps in research or trends in perpetuating a particular image of Paganism, more publications on a given topic may gradually render my commentary outdated. Analyses of Pagan studies can always be improved upon simply by following up, identifying data that I inadvertently overlooked or examining recent developments. Since I hope that research in Pagan studies continues to grow and thrive, this invites further inquiry into how fields develop and how they interact with their object of study.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Pagan Studies Presentations at the American Academy of Religion, 1990-Present

Pagan Studies Presentations at the AAR - 1990 to Present			
Group/Program Unit	Presenter	Affiliation	Title
1990			
New Religious Movements Group	Yvonne Scott	Western Illinois University	New Age, Old Age: A Comparison of Feminist Spirituality in its New Thought and New Age Manifestations
	Nikki Bado	Ohio State University	Stirring the Cauldron: The Impact of the Women's Movement on the Old Religion
	Edward R. Canda	University of Kansas	Neoshamanism: A 'New Age' Revitalization Movement
	Daniel C. Noel	Vermont College of Norwich	Can the New Shamanism Come of Age? Cross-Cultural Fantasy and Fictive Power in a Popular Religious Movement
1991			
Roundtable Session (unspecified Group/Unit)	Jonathan Seidel	University of California, Berkeley	Rabbis and Witches in Combat
1992			
Church-State Studies Group	Catharine Cookson	Indiana University, Bloomington	A Report from the Free Exercise Trenches: A Case Study of Religious Freedom Issues Faced by the Wiccans Practicing in the United States

1993			
New Religious Movements Group	Sarah M. Pike	Indiana University, Bloomington	Forging Magical Selves: Gendered Bodies and Ritual Fires at Neo-pagan Festivals
Person, Culture, and Religion Group	Sian Reid	Carleton University	As I do Will, So Mote It Be: Magic as Metaphor in Neo-pagan Witchcraft
1994			
Religion and Ecology Group	Bron Taylor	University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	Environmental Paganism and the Resacralization of Turtle Island
Religion and the Social Sciences	Sian Lee Reid	Carleton University	Illegitimate Religion: Neopagan Witchcraft and the Institutional Sanction of Religion in Canada
New Religious Movements Group	Ina Johanna Fandrich	Temple University	"...and, for herself, she gloried in being a priestess to an oder so venerable and advantageous...": The Voodoo Arrests of 1850 and 1863 in New Orleans
	John K. Simmons	Western Illinois University	Chronicling the Emrgence of an Ecofeminist Spiritual Movement in the Conservative Midwest
1995			
Religion and Ethics in Health Care Group	Selena Fox	University of Wisconsin, Madison	When Goddess is God: Pagans, Recovery, and Alcoholics Anonymous
New Religious Movements Group	Sarah M. Pike	Indiana University, Bloomington	Blood That Matters: Cultural Purity, Neo-pagan Borrowers and Native American Others
	Siobhan Houston	Harvard University	Chaos Magic: Postmodern Shamanism and the Legacy of Austin Osman Spare
	Daniel C. Noel	Vermont College of Norwich University	Shamanthropology: Assessing Neoshamanism as a New Ethnographic Movement

Additional Meeting	Nature Religions Scholars Networking Meeting (11:45 AM - 12:45 PM)		
1996			
Theosophy and Theosophic Thought Seminar	Massimo Introvigne	Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR)	Witchcraft, Evil, and Memnoch the Devil: Esoteric Theosophical Themes in Anne Rices' New Orleans Fiction
Additional Meeting	Nature Religions Scholars Network Meeting (1:00-3:00 PM)		
1997			
New Religious Movements Group	Bron R. Taylor	University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	Pagan Environmentalism and Green Apocalypticism - From Global Bricolage to the Question of Violence
Women and Religion Section	Pamela A. Detrixhe	Temple University	Foundations of Religion: Contextualizing the Gospel According to Margaret Murray
	Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas	Temple University	Finding the Goddess in the Masses: A Formative Meta-ethnographic Methodology for Women Scholars in Religion
	Carol Hepokoski	Graduate Theological Union	Goddess Research: Critical Perspectives from the Feminist Archaeology of Gender
	Nancy Ramsey	University of California, Santa Barbara	Remember Who You Are and Whom You Represent: Researching Wicca as a Scholar and a Witch
Women and Religion Section	Naomi R. Goldenberg (Presiding)	University of Ottawa	Rebirth of the Goddess: Thea-ology, Autobiography, and Embodied Thinking
	Carol P. Christ	Ariadne Institute for Myth and Ritual, Athens, Greece	
	Judith E. Plaskow	Manhattan College	

	Christine Downing	San Diego State University	
	Kwok Pui-Lan	Episcopal Divinity School	
	Gordon D. Kaufman	Harvard University	
Theology and Religious Reflection Section	Rita M. Gross	University of Wisconsin, Eau Clair	Goddesses in Historical, Comparative, and Theological Perspectives
Additional Meeting	Nature Religion Scholars Network (3:45-6:15 PM)		
1998			
New Religious Movements Group	Danny L. Jorgensen	University of South Florida	American Neo-Paganism: The Participants' Social Identities
	Scott E. Russell	University of South Florida	
Comparative Studies in Religion Section AND New Religious Movements Group	Sarah M. Pike (Presiding)	California State University, Chico	"Nature Religion" as a Theoretical Construct: Reflections from an Emerging Field
	Adrian Ivakhiv	York University	
	Jeffrey Kaplan	University of Helsinki, Finland	
	Daniel C. Noel	Vermont College of Norwich University	
	Bron R. Taylor	University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh	
	Sarah McFarland Taylor	University of California, Santa Barbara	

	Catherin L. Albanese (Respondent)	University of California, Santa Barbara	
Additional Meeting	Nature Religions Scholars Network (3:45-6:15 PM)		
1999			
Nature Religions Scholars Network (Additional Meeting, 9:00-11:30 AM)	Michael York	Bath Spa University College, UK	Towards New Definitions of 'Earth' and 'Nature' Religion
	Barb Davy	Concordia University, Montreal	The Meanings of Nature
	Jo Pearson	Open University, UK	Researching Paganism
	Sarah Pike	California State University - Chico	Children of the Devil or Gifted in Magic?: The Experiences of Adolescents in Contemporary Paganism
	Grove Harris	Harvard University	A Vermont Witchcamp Community
New Religious Movements Group	Sarah Avery	Rutgers University	Neo-Pagan Communal Identity and Authorship in the Charge of the Goddess
	Barbara A. McGraw	Saint Mary's College of California	Whose Religious Freedom? Neopaganism Under Attack in the Discourse About Religion in Public Life
	Glenn W. Shuck	Rice University	The Myth of the Burning Times and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary Wicca
Ritual Studies Group	Nikki Bado-Fralick	Ohio State University	Laying Offerings at the Altar of the Dead: Wiccan Rites of Reconciliation and Remembrance
2000			

Nature Religions Scholars Network (Additional Meeting, 9:00-11:30 AM)	Michael York	Bath Spa University College	Civilisation, Its Discontents and the Place of Nature
	Craig Strobel	Yale University	Embodying Nature: An Experience in Deep Ecology with Anna Halrpin and Ken Otter
	Nancy Ramsey Tosh	University of California, Santa Barbara	Identity Construction and Contemporary Paganism
	Jo Pearson	Open University	I am the Soul of Nature Who Gives Life to the Universe: Wicca, Esotericism and Living Nature
	Barb Davy	Concordia University, Montreal	Refining the Definition of 'Nature Religion' in Relationship to Contemporary Shamanism and Paganism
	Sarah Pike	California State University, Chico	Respondent
New Religious Movements Group	Joanna Pearson	The Open University	Sorceress, Priestess, Goddess, and Witch: The Fin de Siecle and the Development of the Feminine Ideal in Wicca
New Religious Movements Group	Chas S. Clifton	University of Southern Colorado	Fort Hood's Wiccans and the Problem of Pacifism
2001			
Comparative Studies in Religion Section AND Ritual Studies Group	Theresa Smith	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Medicine and Magic: Conversations Between an Anishnaable Medicine Woman and a Cornish Village Witch
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	Enchanted Feminism: Women as Initiators and Crafters of Human Growth
Women and Religion Section	Constance Wise	Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver	A Foucaultian Archaeology and Genealogy into the Discourse of Inclusive Language, or Does One Have to Be Naked to Be a Witch?
2002			

Anthropology of Religion Consultation	Cat McEarchern	University of Stirling	Going Native in Academia: Studying Neo-Paganism as Insider and Outsider
New Religious Movements Group	Michael F. Strmiska	Miyazaki International College	Neopagan Movements in Lithuania and Latvia
	Cat McEarchern	University of Stirling	Varieties of Nature in Modern Paganism
Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group	Joanne Pearson	The Open University	Reconstructing the Witch and Reflecting Wicca: Fantasy and Reality in the Witch Films of the Twentieth Century
	Rachel Wagner	University of Iowa	Bewitching the Box Office: <i>Harry Potter</i> and Religious Controversy
Ritual Studies Group	Kristy Coleman	Claremont Graduate School	Re-w/riting Signifying Structures: Efficacy and Meaning in a Goddess Spirituality Rite
2003			
New Religious Movements Group	Alyssa Beall	Syracuse University	Home, Home on the Web: Use of the Internet in Neopagan Religions
Religion and Ecology Group	Nicole Roskos	Drew University	For the Love of Trees and Pagans: The Decimation of Sacred Groves in Christian History and Its Appropriation by Contemporary Anti-environmentalism
Conference on Contemporary Pagan Studies (9 AM - 6 PM)			
Ritual Studies Group	Constance Wise	University of Denver	Feminist Wiccan Ritual Magic as Effective Cultural Practice
2004			
New Religious Movements Group AND Ritual Studies Group	Laurel Zwissler	University of Toronto	Right Action: Uses of Ritual in Anti-Globalization Protests by Neo-Pagan, United Church, and Catholic Activists
	Beth Dougherty	King's College, London	When Rituals Go Wrong: Angry Goddess, Recalcitrant Reclaimers

	Michael F. Strmiska	Siauliai University, Lithuania	Putting the Blood Back in Blot: The Revival of Animal Sacrifice in Nordic Neopaganism
Religious Freedom, Public Life, and the State Group	Michael York	Bath Spa University College	Middle Class/"Out Class" Roles for Pagans in Bridging Faith and Freedom
Women and Religion Section	Marcia Beauchamp (Presiding)	California Institute of Integral Studies	Untold or Silenced Knowledge? Ethnographies on Neo-Pagan Goddess Spiritualities and the Academy
	Nikki Bado-Fralick	Iowa State University	Panelist
	Kristy Coleman	Claremont Graduate University	
	Pamela A. Detrixhe	Temple University	
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	
	Sarah Pike	California State University, Chico	Responding
Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Group	Kocku von Stuckrad	University of Amsterdam	European Polythesim Revisited: From "Pagan Dreams" to Visual Culture in Renaissance Studies
Women and Religion Section	Constance Wise	Metropolitan State College of Denver	Every Woman Creates the Meaning of Woman: A Process Thought Alternative to Gender Essentialism
Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Group	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	Refusing to be a Woman, Claiming to be a Witch: Inviting Students of French Feminism and American Witchcraft to Engage in Dialogue

2005

New Religious Movements Group AND Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Michael York (Presiding)	London, United Kingdom	Neo-Pagan Religions in Central and Eastern Europe: Identity, Community and Challenge
	Adrian Ivakhiv	University of Vermont	Panelist
	Victor Shnirelman	Russian Academy of Sciences	
	Egidija Ramanauskaite Kiskina	Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania	
	Gintautas Mazeikis	Siauliai University, Lithuania	
	Sarah Pike	California State University, Chico	Responding
Platonism and Neoplatonism Group	Robert Puckett	Georgia Perimeter College	Contested Pagan Theologies
Death, Dying, and Beyond Consultation	Michael F. Strmiska	Central Connecticut State University	Pagans, Death, and Dying
New Religious Movements Group	Jonathan Moore	Grinnell College	Pagans on the Prairie: Correllian Wicans and Community Identity in Central Illinois
	Laurel Zwissler	University of Toronto	Reading Between the Magi: Exploring Isobel Bird's Young Adult Fiction Series, <i>The Circle of Three</i>
	Christine Kraemer	Boston University	Gender Essentialism in Matriarchalist Utopian Fantasies: Are Popular Novels Vehicles of Sacred Stories, or Only Sacred Propaganda?
Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Aislinn Jones	American Academy of Religion	Gods of Blood and Gods of Land: Authenticity Claims in Celtic Paganism

	Chas S. Clifton	Colorado State University, Pueblo	Flying Ointments and the Discourse of Secrecy in Contemporary Wicca
	Helen Berger	West Chester University	Paths to Teenage Witchcraft: A Cross National Study
	Douglas Ezzy	University of Tasmania	
	Douglas E. Cowan	University of Missouri, Kansas City	Dating Modern Paganism: Material Culture and Calendrical Subversion
	Michael York	London, United Kingdom	Responding
Religion and the Social Sciences Section AND Anthropology of Religion Group	Hannah Sanders	Curry College, Milton	From Victim to Witch: Discourses of Dis/Empowerment in 1990s Teenage Witchcraft
2006			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Jason Winslade	DePaul University	Alchemical Rhythm: Sacred Dynamic Fire and the Politics of Drumming
	Murph Pizza	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	The Fourfold Goddess and the Undying God: Anatomies of Minnestoan Bootstrap Witchcraft Traditions
	Laura Wildman-Hanlon	Cherry Hill Seminary	Children of Converts: Generational Retention in the Neo-Pagan New Religious Movement
	James R. Lewis	University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point	The Pagan Explosion
New Religious Movements Group	Helen Cornish	Goldsmiths College, University of London	The 1951 Fraudulent Mediums Act: Rediscovering Key Events in Pagan Historiography
	Adrian Harris	University of Winchester	Deep Currents: The Two Tides of Neo-Paganism

Religion and Ecology Group AND Pagan Studies Consultation	Christina Welch	University of Winchester	
	Chris Klassen	Wilfrid Laurier University	Speaking Nature: Multivocal Participation in the Search for a Sustainable World
	Helen A. Berger	West Chester University	Teenage Witches and Environmentalism
	Douglas Ezzy	University of Tasmania	
	Alan Shear	McHenry County College	Contemporary Pagan Pilgrimage in America
	Robert S. Corrington	Drew University	Responding
Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group	Melanie L. Harris	Texas Christian University	Loving the Spirit: Expressions of Paganism in Alice Walker's Non-Fiction
Ritual Studies Group	Wendy Griffin	California State University, Long Beach	Doing Ritual, Doing Time: Women Prisoners, Witchcraft, and Empowerment
African Religions Group	Bolaji Bateye	Obafemi Awolowo University	"Osa Eleiye" (The Witches' Verse!): Yoruba Orature, the Babalawo, and Female Power
Lesbian-Feminist Issues and Religion Group	Kerry Noonan	University of California, Los Angeles and California State University, Northridge	Sisterhood or Polarity?: Controversies Over the "Guardian Priestess" Path in Dianic Witchcraft
2007			
Women and Religion Section	Jeannine Hill Fletcher	Fordham University	"This Woman is a Pagan, but a Very Good Friend": Chinese Women in the American Religious Imagination
	Barbara Davy	Ottawa, ON	Reading Ourselves Into the Land

Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Candace Kant	Community College of Southern Nevada	Sacred Land in the Midst of Modernity: The Temple of Goddess Spirituality Dedicated to Sekhmet
	Anne R. Key	California Institute of Integral Studies	
	Wendy Griffin	California Sate University, Long Beach	Borders and Badlands: The Goddess Temple of Orange County
	Laurel Zwissler	University of Toronto	Pagansim as Interfaith and Every Faith: Christian Ritual Borrowing
New Religious Movements Group	Z. Kermani	Harvard University	"Don't Eat the Incense": Children's Participation in Contemporary Pagan Practice
	Gabriella V. Smith	University of Kansas	Gwinever Rain: Spiritual Literacy and Adolescent Empowerment
Ritual Studies AND Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Donna Lynne Seamone (Presiding)	Acadia University	Pagan Studies of Ritual
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	Panelist
	Sabina Magliocco	California State University, Northridge	
	Wendy Griffin	California Sate University, Long Beach	
	Nikki Bado-Fralick	Iowa State University	
	Lesely A. Northrup	Florida International University	Responding
Comparative Studies in Religion Section	Kathleen M. Self	St. Lawrence University	Conversion as Illocutionary Act: Christian, Pagan, and Back Again

Religion, Politics, and the State Group AND Contemporary Pagan Studies Consultation	Grove Harris	Cambridge, MA	Contributions from Margin to Center: Wiccan Challenges to the Establishment of Religion
	Robert Puckett	American Academy of Religion	Pastor and Priest/ess: Pagan Clerical Roles at a Crossroads
	Barbara A. McGraw	Saint Mary's College of California	Speaking Truth to Power: Religious Accommodation of Pagan Inmates in California Correctional Institutions
	Patrick McCollum	Cherry Hill Seminary	
	Michael York	London, United Kingdom	Channeling Selena Fox on the Pentacle Quest
Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Unit	Arisika Razak	California Institute of Integral Studies	Alice Walker Womanism: Pagan, Ecologic, and Embodied Ethical Perspectives
Women and Religion Section	Beverly Lucas	Arizona State University	Conjured Realities: Depicting Wiccan Women in Film
2008			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Religion and Popular Culture Group	Sonja Spear	Indiana University, Indianapolis	Haunted Irvington: Civic Pride, Memory, and the Klan
	Anne R. Key	California Institute of Integral Studies	"Los Muertos Tienen Sed, los Vivos Culpas" (The Dead Are Thirsty, and the Living Are Culpable): The Use of Image in Rituals Honoring the Ancestors in Pre-Conquest and Modern Mexico
	Chas S. Clifton	Colorado State University, Pueblo	Campus Pagans and the Day of the Dead: Civil Religion and Cultural Boundaries
	Wendy Griffin	California State University, Long Beach	
	Jason Winslade	DePaul University	"When the Veils Are Thin": An Occult Performance Theory

	Adrian Harris	University of Winchester	The Halloween of Cross Bones
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Shawn Arthur	Appalachian State University	Chinese Communism Loses the Polytheistic Challenge: the Reality of Religion in Contemporary China
	Anna Fedele	Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris	Feminist Spirituality and Its Metamorphoses in Traditionally Catholic Countries of Southern Europe
	Mariya Lesiv	University of Alberta	Glory to Dazboh (Sun-god) or to All Native Gods? Momotheism and Polytheism in Ukrainian Neo-Paganism
	David L. Miller	Syracuse University	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Graham Harvey	Open University	Polytheism and the Indigenization of No-Longer Esoteric Paganisms
	Constance Wise	Metropolitan State College of Denver	Process Thought as Philosophical Response to the Polytheistic Challenge
	Michael York	London, United Kingdom	The Pantheonic Challenge to "Deca-logic": Polytheism as Contemporary Theology and the Issue of Human Sacrifice
	Laurel C. Schneider	Chicago Theological Seminary	Responding
Ritual Studies Group AND Queer Theory and LGBT Studies in Religion Consultation	Pat Califia	San Francisco, CA	The Trans Person as Blessing, Not Blasphemy: Pagan Alternatives to Monotheistic Condemnation
Indigenous Religious Traditions Group	Michael York	London, United Kingdom	Negotiating the Sacred and the Possibility of Indigenous and Pagan Discourse
A Pagan Religious Ritual Celebrating Samhain (October 31, 8:30-11:00PM)			

Religion and Disability Studies Group AND Religions, Medicines, and Healing Group	Joanne Pearson	University of Winchester	Disabled Rites: Ritual, the Body, and Mental Health in Wicca
2009			
Pagan Studies Reception (Friday, 5:00-8:00 PM)			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Indigenous Religious Traditions Group	Suzanne Owen	Leeds Trinity	Indigenous Religious Expressions? Mi'kmaq Tradition and British Druidry
	Dennis Kelley	Iowa State University	Negotiating Indigeniety Via Contemporary Cultural Practice: Traditional Native Basket Weavers, Sacred Places, and Modern Resource Management
	Michael F. Strmiska	Orange County Community College, Middletown, NY	Houses for the Holy? A Reconstructionist Debate Among Modern Norse Pagans
	Amy Whitehead	Open University	The Goddess and the Virgin: Examining the Role of Statue Devotion in Western Europe
	Janice Weaver	University of Georgia	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Graham Harvey	Open University	Materiality and Spirituality Aren't Opposites (Necessarily): Paganism and Objects
	Bron Taylor	University of Florida	Terrapoltan Earth Religion or Eco-totalitarianism? Assessing the Peril and Promise of Nature Religion in Environmental Governance
	Michael York	Academy for Cultural and Educational Studies, London	Idolatry, Ecology, and the Sacred as Tangible

Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Chas S. Clifton	Colorado State University, Pueblo	Before Stranger: Twentieth Century Paganism as a Literary Response to Texts
	Christine Kraemer	Austin, TX	Contemporary Paganism, Utopian Reading Communities, and Sacred Nonmonogamy: The Religious Impact of Heinlein and Starhawk's Fiction
	Adrian Ivakhiv	University of Vermont	Journeys Upstream and Encounters Across Time: Reading the Pagan and Indigenous Through Cinema
	Megan Goodwin	University of North Carolina	Open Source Religions Versus Citationality: The Function of Literature in Contemporary Pagan Praxis
Men's Studies in Religion Group	Gabriella V. Smith	University of Kansas	Gender Politics and the Construction of Masculinity in Evangelical Christian and Contemporary Pagan Men's Advice Literature
2010			
A Chants Encounter: Pagan Gospel/Jam Session (Friday 8:00-10:30 PM)			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Men, Masculinities, and Religions Group	Helen A. Berger	West Chester University	Pagan Men and Gender Equity by the Numbers
	Christopher W. Chase	Iowa State University	Songs of the Mari: Male Becoming Masculine in American Paganism 1970-1977
	Marion G. Mason	Bloomsburg University	Gender Differences among Pagan Seminary Students
	Douglas Ezzy	University of Tasmania	Responding
	Mark Justad	Guilford College	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Shawn Arthur (Presiding)	Appalachian State University	Idolatry and Tangible Sacrality: The Conversation Continues

	Michael York	Academy for Cultural and Educational Studies, London	Panelist
	Margot Adler	National Public Radio	
	Bron Taylor	University of Florida	
	Amy Whitehead	Open University	
Religion and Ecology Group	Julia Watts Belser	Missouri State University	Unmaking the Demonization of Paganism: An Ecofeminist Critique of Idolatry Discourse in Jewish Environmental Thought
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Koenraad Elst	Morstel, Belgium	From the Mono/Poly Debate to the Identitarians: Politicized Pagan Revivalism in Europe
	Thad N. Horrell	Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver	Heathen Ethnic Projects and the Problem of Race in the United States
	Kaarino Aitamurto	University of Helsinki and Aleksanteri Institute	The Liasons of Nationalism, Conservatism, and Leftist Ideology within Rodnoverie: Approaching the Paradox
	Michael Strmiska	Orange County Community College, State University of New York	Transatlantic Tensions in Norse Paganism: Left-Wing/Right-Wing Tendencies in America and Europe
	Mattias Gardell	Stockholm University	Responding
2011			
Western Esotericism Group	Sasha Chaitow	University of Exeter	A Different Delphi: Contemporary Hellenic Paganism and Nationalist Politics in Modern Greece
	Whitney Bauman (Presiding)	Florida International University	Elemental Theology and Feminist Earth Practices

Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Religion and Ecology Group	Rosemary R. Ruether	Claremont Graduate University	Panelist
	Starhawk	Earth Activist Training	
	Marion S. Grau	Graduate Theological Union	Responding
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	
	Heather Eaton	Saint Paul University	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Kerry Noonan	California State University, Northridge	"Wish They All Could Be California Grrrls?": The Influence of California Women on the Goddess Movement and Neo-Paganism
	Christopher W. Chase	Iowa State University	Building a California Bildung: Theodore Roszak's and Alan Watts's Contributions to Pagan Hermeneutics
	Kristy Coleman	Santa Clara University and San Jose State University	Re-riting Woman: Dianic Wicca
	Fritz Muntean	Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies	Responding
Indigenous Religious Traditions Group	Lee Gilmore	California State University, Northridge	Pagans at the Parliament: Interfaith Dialogue between Pagans and Indigenous Communities
	Sabina Magliocco	California State University, Northridge	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Suzanne Owen	Leeds Trinity	Definitons, Decisions, and Druids: Presenting Druidry as a Religion
	Christine Kraemer	Cherry Hill Seminary	Perceptions of Scholarship in Contemporary Paganism

	Helen Berger	Brandeis University	Fifteen Years of Continuity and Change within the American Pagan Community
	Caroline Tully	University of Melbourne	Researching the Past is a Foreign Country: Cognitive Dissonance as a Response by Practitioner Pagans to Academic Research on the History of Pagan Religions
2012			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Michael York	Amsterdam, Netherlands	A Contemporary Mystery Religion: The Amsterdam Coffee Shop as a Pagan Praxis
	Christopher Chase	Iowa State University	Home and Back Again!: Theological Community and Reciprocity in Pagan Liturgical Music
	Morgan Davis	Warren Wilson College	The Witch is Alone: Individual and Communal Authority in American Wicca
	Michelle Mueller	Graduate Theological Union	Deepening Conversations Between Ritual Studies and Pagan Studies
	Nikki Bado	Iowa State University	Responding
Special Topics Forum	Barbara McGraw (Presiding)	Saint Mary's College, California	Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Survey on Religion in Prisons
	Stephanie Boddie	Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life	Panelist
	Cary Funk	Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life	
	Patrick McCollum	American Correctional Chaplains Association	
	Aminah McCloud	DePaul University	

	Susan Van Baalan	Georgetown University	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Jason Winslade	DePaul University	When Pan Met Babalon: Challenging Sex Roles at a Thelemic/Pagan Festival
	Jefferson Calico	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	In the Mead Hall: Divine-Human Interaction in Contemporary Heathen Spirituality
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	Pagan and/or Christian? Sacrificial Religion in Oslo, July 22, 2011
	Michael York	Amsterdam, Netherlands	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Indigenous Religious Traditions Group	Koenraad Elst	Belgian Senate, Brussels	The Gathering of the Elders: An Emerging Global Platform of Pagan and Indigenous Religions
	David Wilson	University of Edinburgh	Becoming Indigenous: Falsifiable Authenticity and Traditional Legitimacy in New Religious Movements (Lessons from a Case Study on a Spiritual Community)
	Mary Hamner	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Middle-class Vodou: Spirit Possession and Marginality in the United States
	Thad Horrell	University of Denver and Illiff School of Theology	Becoming Indigenous in a Reconstructed Ancestral Tradition
	Sabina Magliocco	California State University, Northridge	Indigeness and the Discourse of Authenticity in Modern Paganisms
Lesbian-Feminist Issues and Religion Group	Marie Cartier	California State University, Northridge	Herlands: Finding Goddess on Lesbian Land
	Wendy Griffin	Cherry Hill Seminary	
2013			

Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Film: The Spirit of Albion		
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Chas Clifton (Presiding)	Colorado State University, Pueblo	What Is Wrong with Pagan Studies? Critiquing Methodologies Note: this is the theme for the entire panel
	Amy Hale	Saint Petersburg College	Navigating Praxis: Pagan Studies vs. Esoteric Studies
	Michael York	Academy for Cultural and Educational Studies, London	An Intersubjective Critique of 'A Critique of Pagan Scholarship'
	Nikki Bado	Iowa State University	Dancing in a Universe of Light and Shadows
	Shawn Arthur	Appalachian State University	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND New Religious Movements Group	John Harness	University of Chicago	We Are an Old People, We Are a New People': Forgetting and Re-historicizing in Neopagan Identity Formation
	Brian McPhee	University of South Florida	Gaming the Past: The Legend of Zelda, Postmodern Gamers, and 'Nostalgia for the Origins'
	Dell deChant	University of South Florida	
	Regina Oboler	Ursinus College	Coming of Age in the Contemporary Pagan Community
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Suzanne Owen	Leeds Trinity University	Is Anything 'Sacred' at Beltane at Thornborough?
	Helen Berger	Brandeis University	Solitary Practitioners in the United States
	Era Elizabeth Pople	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	We Prefer the Term Caster': Constructions of Witchcraft in <i>Beautiful Creatures</i>
	Gwendolyn Reece	American University	Pagan Practices and their Impediments

Sociology of Religion Group AND SBL Ideological Criticism Group	Angela Coco	Southern Cross University	Working on Pagan Time: Changing Consciousness through a Pagan Worldview
Ritual Studies Group	Michael Houseman	Practical School of Higher Studies, Paris	Prescriptive Self-consciousness and the Hokey Aesthetics of Neopagan and New Age Ceremonial
2014			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Ritual Studies Group	Graham Harvey	Open University	Indigenous Cultural Events, Sovereignty, and Inter-species Relations
	Donna L. Seamone	Acadia University	The Path has a Mind of its Own': Eco-Agri-Pilgrimage to the Corn Maze Performance - An Exercise of Cross-Species Sociality
	Sabina Magliocco	California State University, Northridge	Beyond the Rainbow Bridge: Animal Spirits in Contemporary Pagan Religions
	Samuel Etikpah	University of Oslo	Transition Concepts in Ghanaian Festival Performance
	Rane Willerslev	University of Aarhus	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Daniela Cordovil	Pará State University	The Cult of Afro-Brazilian aand Indigenous Gods in Brazilian Wicca: Symbols and Practices
	Shai Feraro	Tel Aviv University	Is there a Future for Neopaganism in the Holy Land?: Past and Present in the Shaping of a Community-Building Discourse among Israeli Pagans, 1998-2013
	Dmitry Galtsin	Library of Russian Academy of Science, St. Petersburg, Russia	Divine Feminism in the Silver Age of Russian Culture and Beyond
	Adrian Ivakhiv	University of Vermont	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Gay	Leigh Ann Hildebrand	Graduate Theological Union	Born This Way? Keshet, AhavaRaba, Gefilte Fetish and Jewish Conversion

Men and Religion Group AND Lesbian-Feminist Issues in Religion Group AND Religious Conversions Group	Rachel Morgain	Australian National University	Goddess Evolving: Gender Transformations and Feminist Contestations in Reclaiming Paganism
	Philip Francis	Manhattan College	Sex Versus Certainty: An Ethnography of Evangelical Deconversion
	Lisa Powell	St. Ambrose University	Sex, Gender, and Desire in Christian Conversions
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Douglas Ezzy	University of Tasmania	Relational Ethics, Ritual, and the New Animism
	Kimberly Kirner	California State University, Northridge	Honoring Nature: Contemporary Animist Paganisms and Practical Dimensions of Sustainability
	Graham Harvey	Open University	Bear Feasts, Ritual Play and the New Animism
	Chris Crews	The New School	Earth Bound Animists Friends vs. Human Enemies: Latour's Gaia and the Anthropocene Geostory
	Suzanne Owen	Leeds Trinity University	New Animism - A New Theology?
	Fritz Detwiler	Adrian College	Responding
Religion and Sexuality Group	Michelle Mueller	Graduate Theological Union	Embracing the Ordeal Path: Sacred BDSM among Contemporary Pagans
2015			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Gwendolyn Reece	American University	Pagan Clergy and Leaders: A Qualitative Snapshot
	Daniela Cordovil	Pará State University	Political Engagement of Feminists and Ecoical Pagans: A Comparison between Brazil and Portugal
	Clara Schoonmaker	Syracuse University	The Fight for the Pentacle: Pagans, Veterans, and the Limitations of American Religious Pluralism
	Paul B. Rucker	Minneapolis, MN	Creting Sacred Space with Art Exhibitions: Another Approach to Interfaith Work
	Alison Beyer	Cherry Hill Seminary	

	Shawn Arthur	Wake Forest University	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Laurel Zwissler	Central Michigan University	In Memoriam Maleficarum: Contemporary Pagan Mobilizations of the Burning Times
	Mary Hamner	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Constructing an Authentic Witchcraft: Traditional Witchcraft, Wicca, and the Normalization of the Craft
	Mariya Lesiv	Memorial University	Blood Brothers or Blood Enemies: Tradition and Ukrainian Pagan Responses to the Ukraine-Russia Crisis
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Indigenous Religious Traditions Group	Erich Fox Tree	Wilfrid Laurier University	One Hundred One Myths about Indigenous Religion, or A Religion about 'Mythical Indigens'
	Suzanne Owen	Leeds Trinity University, University of Chester	Defining Pagan Religions through Charity Law
	Elana Jefferson-Tatum	Emory University	From the Fetish Concept to the Construction of Religion: The Discursive Formation of African Religious Others
2016			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Gwendolyn Reece	American University	The Scalability Crisis: Contemporary Paganism and Institutionalization
	Patricia E. 'Iolana	University of Glasgow	An Imagined and Idealised Past as a Source for Revisionist Rhetoric: The Dual Lives of the 1921 Murray Thesis
	Lee Gilmore	San José State University	Pagan and Indigenous Communities at the Parliament (Part 2): The Myth of the Unbroken Line in Constructions of Authenticity
	Leigh Ann Hildebrand	Graduate Theological Union	Jews (and Jewitches) Touching Trees: Hybrid Jewish/Pagan Identity, Ritual Practice, and Belief
	Shawn Arthur	Wake Forest University	Responding

Contemporary Pagan Studies Group	Barbara Jane Davy	Cherry Hill Seminary	Reconstructing Alternatives: Wicked Dilemmas for Contemporary Pagan Responses to Modernity
	Stephen Quilley	University of Waterloo	
	Thomas Berendt	Philadelphia, PA	Postmodern Paganisms: Embracing Polythetic Plurality, Diversity, and Hybridity
	Christopher W. Chase	Iowa State University	Differential Modernities: Rethinking Vodou in Contemporary Paganism
	Amy Hale	Helix Education	Responding
European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism	J. Gordon Melton	Baylor University	The Fear of the Occult Among Christian Evangelicals
	Jeffrey J. Kripal	Rice University	The Fear of the Occult in Popular Culture
	Massimo Introvigne	Center for Studies on New Religions	The Fear of the Occult in Politics
	Henrik Bogdan	University of Gothenburg	The Fear of the Occult and Academia
Comparative Studies in Religion Section	Alexis S. Wells	Vanderbilt University	Of Hags and Witches: The Limits and Possibilities of Magic in the Study of Enslaved Religiosity in the Lower South
2017			
Religion and Politics Units	Kevan Feshami	University of Colorado	Widerkehr der Ahnen: Paganism, Black Metal, and the Anti-Christian and Anti-capitalist Roots of the White Genocide Myth
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND Western Esotericism Unit	Vivianne Crowley	Nottingham Trent University	Ancient Egypt in an Irish Castle: How an Irish Goddess Spirituality Movement Bridges the Esoteric and Esoteric, Pagan, and Christian Worlds
	Caroline Tully	University of Melbourne	Isis of the North: The Celtic Priests of the Linage of Scota

	Diana Brown	Syracuse University	Eastern Methods and Western Bodies': Dion Fortune's Assessment of Yoga for a Western Audience
	Jason Winslade	DePaul University	Faeries, Bards, and Magicians: Fantasy Worlds of the Pagan Music Festival
New Religious Movements Unit	Clara Schoonmaker	Syracuse University	No Skyclad Beyond This Point': Transforming Society Through Pagan Rituals of Resistance
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND Religion and Migration Unit AND Religion and Popular Culture Unit AND Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit AND Religion, Media, and Culture Unit	Alison Marshall (Presiding)	Brandon University	American Gods
	Robert N. Puckett	American Academy of Religion	Panelist
	Laurel Zwissler	Central Michigan University	
	Ken Derry	University of Toronto	
	Rubina Ramji	Cape Breton University	
	Sailaja Krishnamurti	Saint Mary's University	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Peg Aloï	State University of New York, New Paltz	We Are the Weirdos, Mister!': The Re-emergence of W.I.T.C.H. and a New Generation of Media Witches
	Sabina Magliocco	California State University, Northridge	Witchcraft as Political Resistance: Magical Responses to the 2016 Election
	Egil Asprem	Stockholm University	The Magical Theory of Politics: Meme Magic, the Cult of Kek, and How to Topple an Egregore

Arts Series: Harry Potter and the Sacred Text	Emily Filler (Presiding)	Earlham College	This panel features the hosts of a podcast that treats Harry Potter as a Sacred Text. Panel is sponsored by the Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND the Sacred Texts and Ethics Group
	Vanessa Zoltan	Harvard University	Panelist
	Casper ter Kuile	Harvard University	
	Ariana Nedelman	Harvard University	
	Stephanie Paulsell	Harvard University	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Kimberly Kirner	California State University, Northridge	Seeking Healing and Support: Mental and Physical Health Challenges in Pagan Communities
	Garrett Sadler	NASA Ames Research Center	
	Jeffrey Albaugh	Oxnard, CA	A Phenomenological Exploration of Theophany and Metanoia in Contemporary Paganisms
	Jone Salomonsen	University of Oslo	Presence and Absence at the Steilneset Witchcraft Memorial
	Sarah M. Pike	California State University, Chico	
Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit	Michael F. Strmiska	Orange County Community College	The Ambiguity of Ancestors: Questions of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Ethnicity in Modern Pagan Conceptions of the Afterlife
Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit AND Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit AND Women of Color	Zachary Settle	Vanderbilt University	Spinning Survival with Witch Words: What Mary Daly Taught Me About Theological Language

Scholarship, Teaching and Activism Unit			
2018			
Ritual Studies (Workshop) - Methodological Experiments with Ritual Studies (This pre-conference Workshop involves participation in ceremonial practices to reflect on teaching and studying rituals. Specifically mentioned in the various practices employed is the Pagan practice of 'calling in the quarters')	Lee Gilmore	San Jose State University	Panelist
	Ronald Grimes	Wilfrid Laurier University	
	Michael Houseman	École Pratique des Hautes Études	
	Martiin Pehal	Charles University	
	Sarah M. Pike	California State University, Chico	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Francesca Ciancimino Howell	Boulder, CO	Materiality, Food, and Power of Place: Animic Explorations from Italy
	Giovanna Parmigiani	Harvard University	Tarantarsi' Today: Ethnographic Reflections on Pizzica as a Spiritual Practice among a Neo-Pagan Community in Contemporary Salento, Italy

	Holli S. Emore	Cherry Hill Seminary	Group or Solitary: Choices and Spiritual Care Needs in Contemporary Pagan Practice
	Kimberly Kirner	California State University, Northridge	Is Paganism the 'Church of the Back Yard'? Perceiving and Crafting Sacred Place among Contemporary Pagans
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Eriko Kawanishi	Kyoto University	Western Witchcraft in Contemporary Japan
	Dale Wallace	University of KwaZulu-Natal	the Complexity of Context: Issues Impacting the Interactions of Pagans with Traditional African Religions in South Africa
	Russell Burk	Harvard University	Pagan Whiteness: Pagan Appropriation of Africa and African Inspired Religion
	Shawn Arthur	Wake Forest University	Responding
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND Western Esotericism Unit	Shawn Arthur (Presiding)	Wake Forest University	The Increasing Impact of Traditionalism
	Amy Hale	Atlanta, GA	Panelist
	Egil Asprem	Stockholm University	
	Mark Sedgwick	University of Aarhus	
	Ionut Bancila	University of Erfurt	
	Jean-Pierre Brach	Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes	
	Ulrich van Loyen	University of Siegen	
New Religious Movements Unit	Abel Gomez	Syracuse University	Becoming Brujas: Rise of Women and Queer of Color Witchcraft in the U.S.

2019			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Jennifer Uzzell	Durham University	Looking Forward to the Past: The Emergence of Neolithic Style Barrows for Cremated Remains in Contemporary Britain and their Implications for Pagan Communities
	A. Athanasios Apostolopoulos	Westbury, NY	Re-Hellenization in the Greek-American Diaspora: Hellenic Perspectives on Authenticity, Identity, and Conversion
	Tõnno Jonuks	Estonian Literary Museum	Contemporary Paganism and Vernacular Interpretations: Deposits at Sacred Places in Estonia
	Amy Hale	Atlanta, GA	Cornwall as a Site for Discourses of Authenticity in Contemporary Witchcraft
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Helen Berger	Brandeis University	Ethics, Contemporary Pagans, and the Alt-Right
	Giovanna Parmigiani	Harvard University	The 'Politics of Desire' among Southern-Italian Neo-Pagans
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Zachary Montgomery	University of Missouri	An Angry Goddess Challenges Monsanto: The Creation of Boundaries in Contemporary Pagan Discourse
	Kimberly Kirner	California State University, Northridge	When Belief Arises from Interaction: Pagan Relationships to Other-Than-Human Spirits
	Barbara Jane Davy	University of Waterloo	Wyrđ Relations: Relational Ontology and the Gift Ethic
2020			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND History of Christianity Unit AND Religion in Premodern	David Frankfurter (Presiding)	Boston University	Author Meets Critics: Celebrating Ronald Hutton's Contribution to the Academic Study of Religion
	Michael Ostling	Arizona State University	Panelist

Europe and the Mediterranean Unit	Sabina Magliocco	University of British Columbia	Responding
	Alexis S. Wells-Oghoghomeh	Vanderbilt University	
	Chris Miller	University of Waterloo	
	Laurel Zwissler	Central Michigan University	
	Ronald Hutton	University of Bristol	
Nineteenth Century Theology Unit	Michael Putnam	Brown University	Zitkala-Sa and the Politics of Paganism
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Barbara Jane Davy	University of Waterloo	Sacrifice and Feast in Heathen Blót and Húsel
	Fredrik Gregorius	Linköping University	The Landscape of the Gods: Scandinavian Heathenism and the Role of Cultural Memories
	Bran Stigile-Wright	Graduate Theological Union	Social Destruction, Social Purpose: Narratives of Trans Identity in American Heathenry
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Diana Brown	Syracuse University	A Note on the Origins of 'Tech' as Metaphor for Magic
	Kendra Holt Moore	Boston University	Playing the Witch: the Work of Play in Mainstreaming Witchcraft
	Angela Puca	Leeds Trinity University	The Philosophy of Magic, From the Fringe of Society to the Fringe of 'Reality'
	Marisa Franz	New York University	Vital and Spectral Things: Ghosts, Magic, and Everyday Objects in Museums

Religion and Popular Culture Unit	Lisa Kienzl	University of Bremen	Pagan Here, Loving It!' Negotiating Norse Mythology and Paganism in Fan Culture Discussed on the Examples of the Television Series 'American Gods' and 'Jordskott'
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Deoin Cleveland	Cherry Hill Seminary	Missing Millennials: Investigation of Millennial Pagan Identities, Rejection of Community, and Inter-Generational Conflict
	Julia Phillips	University of Bristol	Pagan Witchcraft and Cunning Folk
	Sabina Magliocco	University of British Columbia	The Time of the Tower: Apocalyptic Narratives in Modern Paganism
New Religious Movements Unit	Jefferson Calico	University of the Cumberland	American Völkisch: White Nationalism and the Performance of Religion in Heathenism
2021			
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Damon Berry (Presiding)	St. Lawrence University	Contemporary Pagan Ethics
	Kimberly Kirner	California State University, Northridge	Panelist
	Douglas Ezzy	University of Tasmania	
	Michael York	Cherry Hill Seminary	
	Giovanna Parmigiani	Harvard University	
	Kate Hoeting	Harvard University	
Religion, Attire, and Adornment in North America Seminar	Caroline Tully	University of Melbourne	Power (Un)Dressing: Revealing the Goddess in Contemporary Occult Religion

Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Fredrik Gregorius	Linköping University	Heathen Gods Beyond Nationalism and Race? The Case of Nordic Animism
	Matthew Hartman	Graduate Theological Union	New Ecological Entanglements on the Right: White Christian Nationalism, Alt-Right Ecology, and the Movement from Climate Denialism to Climate Nationalism
	Dillon Sampson	Syracuse University	Religious Enemies, Cultural Brothers: On Heathen-Christian Relations in the Wake of the European Migrant Crisis
Contemporary Pagan Studies Group AND Religion and Ecology Group	Barbara Jane Davy	University of Waterloo	Ancestors of Blood and Ancestors of Place
	Jennifer Snook	Grinnell College	Pilgrimage and DNA: Imaginary Places and Peoplehoods among American Heathens
	Jefferson Calico	University of the Cumberlands	This Place in the World: Blood, Soil, and Capitalism in American Asatru
	Austin Lawrence	Ontario Tech University	To Immanentize Ragnarök or Forge Frith?: Differences in Religious Practise and Belief between Folkish and Inclusive Heathens
	Michael F. Strmiska	Orange County Community College	Respondent
Comparative Studies in Religion Unit	Timothy Grieve-Carlson	Rice University	Poison, Pesticides, and Witch's Spells: Poisoning in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit	Amy Hale (Presiding)	Atlanta, GA	Magic and Museums: Scholars and Practitioners
	Marisa Franz	New York University	Panelist
	Caroline Tully	University of Melbourne	

	Helen Cornish	Goldsmiths College, University of London	
	Viktor Wynd	Viktor Wynd Museum	
	Steven Intermill	Buckland Museum of Witchcraft and Magick	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND Anthropology of Religion Unit AND Law, Religion, and Culture Unit AND New Religious Movements Unit AND Western Esotericism Unit	Megan Goodwin	Northeastern University	Religion, Secularity and the Satanic Temple: A Roundtable with Scholars and Community Members
	Lucien Greaves	The Satanic Temple	Panelist
	Joseph Laycock	Texas State University	
	Laurel Zwissler	Central Michigan University	
	Jay Wexler	Boston University	
	William Chavez	University of California, Santa Barbara	
	Jesper Aagaard Petersen	Norwegian University of Science and Technology	
	Massimo Introvigne	Center for Studies on New Religions	
	Amy Hale	Atlanta, GA	
Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit AND New Religious Movements Unit	Film: J.R. 'Bob' Dobbs and the Church of the SubGenius		

Appendix C – *The Pomegranate* Articles, 1997-Present

Pomegranate Articles 1997-Present			
Year	Issue/ Volume	Title	Author
The Pomegranate: A New Journal of Neopagan Thought			
1997	1	Aradia and the Revival of Modern Witchcraft	Chas S. Clifton
		The Golden Ass of Lucius Apuleius	Maggie Carew
		Pagan Deism: Three Views	Margarian Bridger
		<i>Inside the Sieve: Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft</i> , Edited by James R. Lewis	Kate Slater
	2	What We Don't Know About the Ancient Celts	Rowan Fairgrove
		The Neolithic Great Goddess: A Study in Modern Tradition	Ronald Hutton
		Margaret St. Clair, Forgotten Foremother of Pagan Science Fiction	Chas S. Clifton
		<i>The Spell of Making</i> , By Blacksun	Diana Tracy
		<i>Castings: The Creation of Sacred Space</i> , By Ivo Dominguez Jr.	Diana Tracy
1998	3	The Myth of Historical Narrative: Margaret Murray's The God of the Witches	Nancy Ramsey
		Excavating Sites of Production: Margaret Murray's Theory of Religion in Context	Pam A. Detrixhe
		James George Frazer's The Golden Bough: A Critical Appreciation	Fritz Muntean
		<i>The Witch in History</i> , By Diane Purkiss	Ronald Hutton
	4	The Sacred Marriage: Hierogamy in Grand Opera	John Yohalem
		The Magician of Shakespeare's The Tempest	Maggie Carew
		A Yellow Dress and Chilly Brauron: The Taming of Wild Girls	Kate Slater
		Masks in Magical Meetings	M. Macha NightMare
		<i>Heretic's Heart: A Journey Through Spirit and Revolution</i> , By Margot Adler	Chas S. Clifton
	5	Recent Developments in the Study of The Great European Witch Hunt	Jenny Gibbons
		The Interface of Archaeology and Mythology: A Philosophical Evaluation of the Gimbutas Paradigm	Mara Keller
		Asherah: Goddess of the Israelites	Fritz Muntean

Book Review	Special Issue/Section
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		The Rose Beyond the Grave	Evan John Johns
		Book Reviews: Two Roads to Magical Herbalism	Chas S. Clifton
	6	Seidhr and Seidhrworkers: Recovering Shamanic Practice in Contemporary Heathensim	Jenny Blain
		Journeying the Politics of Ecstasy: Anthropological Perspectives on Neoshamanism	Robert J. Wallis
		The Old Religion	Richard Smoley
		An Archaeological Evaluation of the Gimbutas Paradigm	Brian Hayden
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
1999	7	Savitri Devi and the National Socialist Religion of Nature	Jeffrey Kaplan
		The Stoic Way of Nature: A Pagan Spiritual Path	Michael McNierney
		Love, Suffering, and Evil: A Neopagan View	Gus diZerega
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		Hekate the Salvatrix in Late Antiquity	Sarah Iles Johnston
		Mything in Action: New Ethnicities, Paganisms, and English Law	Peter W. Edge
	8	Methods of Compassion or Pretension? Conducting Anthropological Fieldwork in Modern Magical Communities	Jone Salomonsen
		Whose 'Nature'? Reflections on the Transcendental Signified of an Emerging Field	Adrian Ivakhiv
		Nature & Supernature - Harmony & Mastery: Irony and Evolution in Contemporary Nature Religion	Bron Taylor
		On Meeting Amater-Su (and Oya, too): The Warrior Path for the Non-Practitioner	Mira Zussman
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		Four New Books about Goddesses	Asphodel Long
	9	Men and 'Women's Magic': Contested Narratives of Gender, Seihr, and 'Ergi'	Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis
		Harran: Last Refuge of Classical Paganism	Donald H. Frew
		Another View of the Witch Hunts	Max Dashu
		Myth, History, and Pagan Origins	John Michael Greer
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		The New Edition of Leland's <i>Aradia</i>	Sabina Magliocco
	10	Religion, Violence, and Radical Environmentalism	Bron Taylor

Book Review	Special Issue/Section
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		Weaving a Tangled Web? Pagan Ethics and Issues of History, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Pagan Identity	Anne-Marie Gallagher
		Initiation and the Druid Secret Language: The Three Calls to Cormac Understood as a Druidic Initiation	Brendan Myers
		A Response to Brian Hayden's Article: 'An Archaeological Evaluation of the Gimbutas Paradigm'	Joan Marler
		Of Myths and Monkeys: A Critical Look at Critical Mass	Maureen O'Hara
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
2000	11	Witch Wars: Factors Contributing to Conflict in Canadian Neopagan Communities	Síân Reid
		Complex and Unpredictable Consequences: Jewish Responses to the Catastrophe of 1096	Fritz Muntean
		Death Under Special Circumstances: An Exploration	Leah Samul
		Effeminate Love	John Yohalem
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		<i>A Voice in the Forest: Conversations with Alex Sanders, By 'Jimahl'</i>	Chas S. Clifton
	12	Finding a Folklore	Ronald Hutton
		Contested Meanings: Earth Religion Practitioners and the Everyday	Jenny Blain
		The Many Faces of Kali	David Nelson
		Urth's Well: A Proposed Northern Cosmology	Dana Kramer-Rolls
		Embarassed by Our Origins: Denials and Self-Definition in Modern Witchcraft	Cat Chapin-Bishop and Peter E. Bishop
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
	13	Spells, Saints, and Streghe: Witchcraft, Folk Magic, and Healing in Italy	Sabina Magliocco
		Blót on the Landscape: Re-reading Pope Gregory's Letter on the Heathen Temple	Jeremy Harte
		Shamanistic Elements in Zoroastrianism: The Pagan Past and Modern Reaction	Touraj Daryaei
		Mirra Alfassa: A Western Occultist in India	Christine Rhone
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		<i>The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, By Cynthia Eller</i>	Laurel Homström and Wendy Griffin
	14	Wicca, Esotericism, and Living Nature: Assessing Wicca as Nature Religion	Jo Pearson

		Psychotherapist and Wiccan Clergy: The Ethics of a Dual Relationship	Ellen C. Friedman	
		The Burning Man Festival: Pre-Apocalypse Party or Postmodern Kingdom of God?	Sarah M. Pike	
		The Folklore of the Wicker Man	Leslie Ellen Jones	
		<i>The Triumph of the Moon</i> , By Ronald Hutton	Gina O'Connor and Sarah Whedon	
		<i>The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory</i> , By Cynthia Eller	Brian Hayden	
		<i>Nordic Religions in the Viking Age</i> , By Thomas A DuBois	Cara Hoglund	
2001	15	Fascist Ecology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents	Peter Staudenmaier	
		Modernity, Magickal Cosmologies and Science: A New Cauldron for a New Age?	Dave Green	
		Post-Modernism and Witchcraft Histories	David Waldron	
		Margaret Murray and the Rise of Wicca	Juliette Wood	
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors	
		<i>The Early Greek Concept of the Soul</i> , By Jan Bremmer	Jerome S. Arkenberg	
	16	The Nature of the Divine: Transcendence and Immanence in Contemporary Pagan Theology: A Symposium	Various authors	
		If Witches No Longer Fly: Today's Pagans and the Solanaceous Plants	Chas S. Clifton	
		Frey, God of the World	Ann Gróa Sheffield	
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors	
		<i>Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome</i> , By Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark	Dana Kramer-Rolls	
		<i>Magic, Witchcraft, and the Otherworld</i> , By Susan Greenwood	Daniel Cohen and Douglas Ezzy	
	17	<i>The Goddess and the Alphabet: The Conflict Between Word and Image</i> , By Leonard Shlain	Brian Hayden	
		A Modest Look at Ritual Nudity	Ronald Hutton	
		The Terror of Unseen Things': Saki and the fin-de-siècle Pagan Revival	Nick Freeman	
		Two Souls in One Body: Ethical and Methodological Implications of Studying What You Know	Sîân Reid	
		Weather Magic and Global Warming	Christine Rhone	
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors	
			<i>Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Wiccan Revival</i> , By Philip Heselton	Juliette Wood

		<i>Keepers of the Flame: Interviews with Elders of Traditional Witchcraft in America</i> , By Morganna Davies and Aradia Lynch	Stephanie Martin
		<i>Wiccan Covens: How to Start and Organize Your Own</i> , By Judy Harrow	Fritz Muntean
2002	18	Who Was Aradia? The History and Development of a Legend	Sabina Magliocco
		Women as Initiators and Crafters of Human Growth in the 'Reclaiming' Witchcraft Tradition	Jone Salomonsen
		Traditionalism, Eclecticism, and Ecumenism	Margarian Bridger
		The First Seven Trumps of the Major Arcana (and the Fool) as Patterns for Pagan Leadership: Past, Present and Future	Fritz Muntean
		Patient Counting: What Old Records Tell about the Battle for Souls in England and the English Witch Hanging	Kate Slater
		The Pomegranate Reader's Forum	Various authors
		<i>Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona</i> , By Adrian J. Ivakhiv	Graham Harvey
		<i>Wiccan Warrior: Walking a Spiritual Path in a Sometimes Hostile World</i> , By Kerr Cuhulain	Phoenix Pangaryk
		<i>The Rotting Goddess: The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity</i> , By Jacob Rabinowitz	Doug Ezzy
		<i>The Twelve Wild Swans: Ritual, Exercises & Magical Training in the Reclaiming Tradition</i> , By Starhawk and Hilary Valentine	Chas S. Clifton
The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies			
2004	6.1	Letter from the Editor: The Pomegranate Returns from the Underworld	Chas S. Clifton
		Conference Report: The 2003 Conference on Contemporary Pagan Studies	Cat McEarchern
		Paganism as Root Religion	Michael York
		Geographical Ontology: Levinas, Sacred Landscapes and Cities	Douglas Ezzy
		The Emergence of the Goddess Mary: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages	Dana Kramer-Rolls
		Re-Imagining Inanna: The Gendered Reappropriation of the Ancient Goddess in Modern Goddess Worship	Paul Thomas
		The Colonial Mythology of Feminist Witchcraft	Chris Klassen
		Nature Religion as a Cultural System? Sources of Environmentalist Action and Rhetoric in a Contemporary Pagan Community	Regina Smith Oboler
		Book Excerpt: How Religion Changed in the Bronze Age	Brian Hayden
		<i>European Paganism: The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages</i> , By Ken Dowden	Graham Harvey

		<i>Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism</i> , By Mattias Gardell	Murphy Pizza
		<i>Rediscovering America's Sacred Ground: Public Religion and the Pursuit of the Good in a Pluralistic America</i> , By Barbara A. McGraw	Michael York
		<i>Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States</i> , By Helen A. Berger, Evan A. Leach, and Leigh S. Shaffer	Patricia J. Washburn
		<i>Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona</i> , By Adrian J. Ivakhiv	Grant Potts
		<i>The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Paganism</i> , By Shelley Rabinovitch and James Lewis	Marilyn R. Pukkila
		<i>Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion</i> , By Michael York	Barbara Jane Davy
		<i>Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in Northern European Paganism</i> , By Jenny Blain	Dana Kramer-Rolls
		<i>Wiccan Roots: Gerald Gardner and the Modern Wiccan Revival</i> , By Philip Heselton	Gail Wood
		<i>Tales from Slavic Myths</i> , By Ivan Hudec	Denice Szafran
	6.2	The Shrineless God: Paganism, Literature, and Art in Forties Britain	Nick Freeman
		Raising the Dragon: Folklore and the Development of Contemporary British Eco-Paganism	Andy Letcher
		A Process Epistemology of Wiccan Occult Knowledge	Constance Wise
		Making Magic Modern: Nineteenth-Century Adaptations	Alison Butler
		Sites, Texts, Contexts, and Inscriptions of Meaning: Investigating Pagan Authenticities in a Text-Based Society	Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis
		Civil Religion Aspects of Neo-Paganism	Michael York
		<i>Enchanted Feminism: Ritual, Gender, and Divinity Among the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco</i> , By Jone Salomonsen	Nikki Bado-Fralick
		<i>Gerald Gardner and the Cauldron of Inspiration</i> , By Philip Heselton	Chas S. Clifton
		<i>Lucifer Ascending: The Occult in Folklore and Popular Culture</i> , By Bill Ellis	Sabina Magliocco
		<i>Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality, and the New Age</i> , Edited by Joanne Pearson	Douglas Ezzy
		<i>Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas</i> , By Randy P. Conner with David Hatfield Sparks	Murphy Pizza
2005	7.1	From Fact to Fallacy: The Evolution of Margaret Alice Murray's Witch-Cult	Catherine Noble

	The Theological Interpretation of Myth	Edward P. Butler
	I Would Rather be a God/dess than a Cyborg!: A Pagan Encounter with Donna Haraway	Thom van Dooren
	Book Excerpt: <i>The Mists of Cyberhenge: Mapping the Modern Pagan Internet</i>	Douglas E. Cowan
	<i>The Rotting Goddess: The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity</i> , By Jacob Rabinowitz	Ieuen Jones
	<i>Witches, Druids, and King Arthur</i> , By Ronald Hutton	Chas S. Clifton
	<i>Shamanism and the Ancient Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Archaeology</i> , By James L. Pearson	David Hill
	<i>She Who Changes: Re-imagining the Divine in the World</i> , By Carol P. Christ	Nikki Bado-Fralick
	<i>The Narcissus and the Pomegranate: An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> , By Ann Suter	Sarah M. Pike
7.2	Why 'God' as 'She' Provokes Us: Semiotically Speaking - The Significance of the Divine Feminine	Kristy Coleman
	Renovating the Broom Closet: Factors Contributing to the Growth of Contemporary Paganism in Canada	Sîân Reid
	Goddess Spirituality and Nature in Aotearoa New Zealand	Kathryn Rountree
	Being at Home in Nature: A Levinasian Approach to Pagan Environmental Ethics	Barbara Jane Davy
	The Goddess and/as the Cyborg: Nature and Technology in Feminist Witchcraft	Chris Klassen
	Nature and Ethnicity in East European Paganism: An Environmental Ethic of the Religious Right?	Adrian Ivakhiv
	<i>Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America</i> , By Sabina Magliocco	James R. Lewis
	<i>The Last Pagan: Julain the Apostate and the Death of the Ancient World</i> , By Adrian Murdoch	Chas S. Clifton
	<i>Legitimizing New Religions</i> , By James R. Lewis	Douglas Ezzy
	<i>Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece</i> , By Barbara Goff	Kathy L. Gaca
	<i>Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family</i> , By Rosemary Radford Ruether	Nikki Bado-Fralick
	<i>Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomble</i> , By Paul Christopher Johnson	Gus diZerega
	<i>Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet</i> , By Douglas E. Cowan	Nikki Bado-Fralick

		<i>The Last of the Celts</i> , By Marcus Tanner	Ieuen Jones
		<i>Researching Paganisms</i> , Edited by Jenny Blain, Douglas Ezzy, and Graham Harvey	Michael F. Strmiska
		<i>Contemporary Paganism: Minority Religions in a Majoritarian America</i> , By Carol Barner-Barry	Douglas E. Cowan
2006	8.1	Song of the Car Song of the Cinema: Questioning 'Semi-Orthodox' Pagan Rhetoric about 'Nature'	Ieuen Jones
		Popular Witchcraft and Environmentalism	Douglas Ezzy
		Journey in the Neither-Neither: Austin Osman Spare and the Construction of a Shamanic Identity	Christopher J. Miles
		Chaos from Order: Cohesion and Conflict in the Post-Crowley Occult Continuum	Martin P. Starr
		<i>Modern Paganism: An Investigation of Contemporary Pagan Practices</i> , By V. Vale and John Sulak	Murphy Pizza
		<i>The Deities are Many: A Polytheistic Theology</i> , By Jordan Paper	Graham Harvey
		Film Review: <i>I Still Worship Zeus</i> , Directed by Jamil Said	Michael F. Strmiska
		<i>StarMatter: Towards a New Perspective</i> , Edited by Leslie Brown, Gordon MacLellan, Tom Mason, and Chris Vis	Susan Greenwood
	8.2	Santería Sacrificial Rituals: A Reconsideration of Religious Violence	Mary Ann Clark
		Be Pagan Once Again': Folk Music, Heritage, and Socio-sacred Networks in Contemporary American Paganism	Christopher Chase
		Wandering Dreams and Social Marches: Varieties of Paganism in Late Victorian and Edwardian England	Jennifer Hallett
		Russian Paganism and the Issue of Nationalism: A Case Study of the Circle of Pagan Tradition	Kaarina Aitamurto
		Challenging the Morals of Western Society: The Use of Ritualized Sex in Contemporary Occultism	Henrik Bogdan
		<i>Animism: Respecting the Living World</i> , By Graham Harvey	Robert J. Wallis
		<i>Coming to the Edge of the Circle: A Wiccan Initiation Ritual</i> , By Nikki Bado-Fralick	Douglas E. Cowan
		<i>Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives</i> , By Michael F. Strmiska	Nikki Bado-Fralick
		<i>Garden of the Gods: Myth, Magic, and Meaning</i> , By Christopher McIntosh	Richard Smoley
		<i>The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe</i> , By Linda C. Hulst	Chas S. Clifton

2007	9.1	The Melting Cauldron: Ethnicity, Diversity, and Identity in a Contemporary Pagan Subculture	Marisol Charbonneau
		The Goddess Eostre: Bede's Text and Contemporary Pagan Tradition(s)	Carole Cusack
		Ancestral Wisdom and Ethnic Nationalism: A View from Eastern Europe	Victor Shnirelman
		Medievalism, Paganism, and the Tower Ravens	Boria Sax
		Expanding Religious Studies: The Obsolescence of the Sacred/Secular Framework for Pagan, Earthen, and Indigenous Religion	Mikirou Zitukawa and Michael York
		<i>Not in His Image: Gnostic Vision, Sacred Ecology, and the Futrue of Belief</i> , By John Lamb Lash	Eric Northway
		<i>Religion and Canadian Society: Traditions, Transitions, and Innovations</i> , Edited by Lori G. Beaman	Chris Klassen
		<i>The Nature of Magic: An Anthropology of Consciousness</i> , By Susan Greenwood	Nikki Bado-Fralick
	9.2	The Quandary of Contemporary Pagan Archives	Garth Reese
		The Status of Witchcraft in the Modern World	Ronald Hutton
		Kabbalah Recreata	Egil Asprem
		Putting the Blood Back into Blót: The Revival of Animal Sacrifice in Modern Nordic Paganism	Michael F. Strmiska
		Review Essay: Tarot Studies as Scholarship - The Problem of Placement	Nadya Qamar Chishty-Mujahid
		Modern Occult Rhetoric: Mass Media and the Drama of Secrecy in the Twentieth Century, By Joshua Gunn	Chris Miles
		<i>Aleister Crowley und die Versuchung der Politik</i> , By Marco Pasi, trans, Ferdinand Leopold	Kocku von Stuckrad
		Film Review: <i>Oss Tales</i> , Directed by John Bishop and Sabina Magliocco	Chas S. Clifton
		<i>The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice</i> , By Christopher I. Lehrich	Chris Miles
		<i>Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America</i> , By Chas S. Clifton	Murphy Pizza
		<i>Red Cactus: The Life of Anna Kingsford</i> , By Alan Pert	Chas S. Clifton
2008	10.1	The Goddess Returns to Italy: Paganism and Wicca Reborn as a New Religious and Social Movement	Francesca C. Howell
		A Country for the Savant: Paganism, Popular Fiction, and the Invention of Greece, 1914-1966	Nick Freeman

		Heathens up North: Politics, Polemics, and Contemporary Norse Paganism in Norway	Egil Asprem
		The Figure of the Shaman as a Modern Myth: Some Reflections on the Attractiveness of Shamanism in Modern Societies	Gerhard A. Mayer
		Debating the Witch in the South African Context: Issues Arising from the SAPC Conference 2007	Dale Lancaster Wallace
		<i>Teenage Witches: Magical Youth and the Search for Self</i> , By Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy	Holly Raabe
		<i>The New Generation Witches: Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture</i> , Edited by Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloï	Chas S. Clifton
	10.2	The Love Which Dare Not Speak its Name: An Examination of Pagan Symbolism and Mortality in <i>Fin de siècle</i> Decadent Fiction	Kelly Anne Reid
		Landscape Archaeology, Paganism, and the Interpretation of Megaliths	Jess Beck and Stephen Chrisomalis
		The Goddess and the Virgin: Materiality in Western Europe	Amy Whitehead
		The Prevailing Circumstances: The Pagan Philosophers of Athens in a Time of Stress	Emilie F. Kutash
		Polycentric Polytheism and the Philosophy of Religion	Edward P. Butler
		Re-crafting the Past: The Complex Relationship between Myth and Ritual in the Contemporary Pagan Reshaping of Eleusis	Maria Beatrice Bittarello
		Expanding Religious Studies: The Obsolescence of the Sacred/Secular Framework for Pagan, Earthen, and Indigenous Religion, Part 2: Rethinking the Concept of 'Religion' and 'Maturi' as a New Scheme	Mikirou Zitukawa and Michael York
		<i>The Druids</i> , By Ronald Hutton	Peg Aloï
		<i>Not in Kansas Anymore: Dark Arts, Sex Spells, Money Magic, and Other Things Your Neighbors Aren't Telling You</i> , By Christine Wicker	Joseph Laycock
2009	11.1	Introduction	Sarah Jane Harvey
		Spelling Out History: Transforming Witchcraft Past and Present	Helen Cornish
		Ancient Gods - New Ages: Lessons from Hungarian Paganism	Réka Szilárdigina
		The Roles of Nature, Deities, and Ancestors in Constructing Religious Identity in Contemporary Druidry	Michael T. Cooper
		Modern Paganism as a Legitimizing Framework for Post-Materialist Values	Mika Lassander
		Beyond Sacred: Recent Pagan Engagements with Archaeological Monuments - Current Findings of the Sacred Sites Project	Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis
	11.2	Witchcraft: Changing Patterns of Participation in the Early Twenty First Century	Douglas Ezzy and Helen A. Berger

		Don't Eat the Incense': Children's Participation in Contemporary Pagan Practice	Zohreh Kermani	
		Neuroticism and Intensity of Religious Affect among Practising British Pagans	Leslie J. Francis, Emyr Williams, and Ursula Billington	
		Gender Essentialism in Matriarchalist Utopian Fantasies: Are Popular Novels Vehicles of Sacred Stories, or Purely Propaganda?	Christine Hoff Kraemer	
		Field Report: Doing Ritual, Doing Time	Wendy Griffin	
		A Tenth Anniversary Appreciation of Joscelyn Godwin's Translation of the <i>Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love In a Dream</i>	Nadya Qamar Chishty-Mujahid	
		<i>A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans</i> , By Jeffrey B. Russell and Brooks Alexander	Marisol Charbonneau	
		<i>Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation</i> , By Henrik Bogdan	John Sewell	
		<i>Goddess as Nature: Towards a Philosophical Theology</i> , By Paul Reid-Bowen	Christopher Chase	
2010	12.1	Franz Sättler (Dr. Musallam) and the Twentieth-Century Cult of Adonism	Hans Thomas Hakl	
		Walk Like an Egyptian: Egypt as Authority in Aleister Crowley's Reception of The Book of the Law	Caroline Tully	
		On the Pagan Parallax: A Sociocultural Exploration of the Tension between Ecelecticism and Traditionalism as Observed Among Dutch Wiccans	Léon van Gulik	
		Special Section - Idolatry and Materiality		
		Re-Examining 'Idolatry' in Pagan Studies	Chas S. Clifton	
		Idolatry, Ecology, and the Sacred as Tangible	Michael York	
		Response to Michael York's 'Idolatry, Ecology, and the Sacred as Tangible'	Mogg Morgan	
		Pagans and Things: Idolatry or Materiality?	Amy Whitehead	
		Idolatry, Paganism, and Trust in Nature	Bron Taylor	
		<i>Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon</i> , Edited by Dave Evans and Dave Green	Samuel Eldon Wagar	
		<i>Hidden Circles in the Web: Feminist Wicca, Occult Knowledge, and Process Thought</i> , By Constance Wise	Paul Reid-Bowen	
		<i>Pagan Visions for a Sustainable Future</i> , Edited by Ly de Angeles, Emma Restall Orr, and Thom van Dooren	Leland Glenna	
<i>Tyr: Myth, Culture, Tradition, Volumes 1 (2002), 2 (2003-04), and 3 (2007-08)</i>	Michael F. Strmiska			

Book Review	Special Issue/Section
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		<i>Shock! The Black dog of Bungay</i> , By David Waldron and Christopher Reeve	Dave Evans
	12.2	The Idol and the Numinous: The Pagan Quest for the Holy	Dominique Beth Wilson
		Shamanisms and the Authenticity of Religious Experience	Susannah Crockford
		Negotiation Gender Essentialism in Contemporary Paganism	Regina Smith Oboler
		The Meaning of 'Wicca': A Study in Etymology, History, and Pagan Politics	Ethan Doyle White
		The Magical Cosmology of Rosaleen Norton	Nevill Stuart Drury
		Writing the History of Witchcraft: A Personal View	Ronald Hutton
		<i>The Trials of the Moon</i> , By Ben Whitmore	Peg Aloï
		<i>Remembering a Faery Tradition: A Case of Wicca in Nineteenth-Century America</i> , By Trudy Last	Chas S. Clifton
		<i>Sacred Terror</i> , By Douglas E. Cowan	Peg Aloï
		Conference Report: PantheaCon 2011 Report	Christine Hoff Kraemer
2011	13.1	Response to Dominique Beth Wilson	Michael York
		The Birth of Counterjihadist Terrorism: Reflections on Some Unspoken Dimensions of 22/7	Egil Aspren
		Pagan Saxon Resistance to Charlemagne's Mission: 'Indigenous' Religion and 'World' Religion in the Early Middle Ages	Carole Cusack
		Contemporary Paganism, Utopian Reading Communities, and Sacred Nonmonogamy: The Religious Impact of Heinlein's and Starhawk's Fiction	Christine Hoff Kraemer
		John Michell, Radical Traditionalism, and the Emerging Politics of the Pagan New Right	Amy Hale
		Researching the Past is a Foreign Country: Cognitive Dissonance as a Response by Practitioner Pagans to Academic Research on the History of Pagan Religions	Caroline Jane Tully
		<i>The Museum of Witchcraft: A Magical History</i> , Edited by Kerriann Godwin	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>Theater in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man</i> , By Lee Gilmore	Jason Lawton Winslade
	13.2	Response to Amy Hale	Michael York
		Darna: A Lithuanian Pagan Approach to Life	Egidija Ramanauskaite and Rimas Vaišnys
		Revisiting the Semnonenhain: A Norse Anthropogonic Myth and the Germania	Michael D.J. Bintley

		The Heart of Thelema: Mortality, Amorality, and Immortality in Aleister Crowley's Thelemic Cult	Mogg Morgan
		Entering the Crack Between the Worlds: Symbolism in Western Shamanism	Susannah Crockford
		Robert Cochrane and the Gardnerian Craft: Feuds, Secrets and Mysteries in Contemporary British Witchcraft	Ethan Doyle White
		Revisionism and Counter-Revisionism in Pagan History	Ronald Hutton
		Contemporary City Shaman Jóska Soós Included in the New Antwerp MAS Museum	Tamara Ingels
		<i>Children of Cain: A Study of Modern Traditional Witches</i> , By Michael Howard	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>A New History of Shinto</i> , By John Breen and Mark Teeuwen	Joyce E. Boss
		<i>Genuine Witchcraft is Explained: The Secret History of the Royal Windsor Coven and the Regency</i> , By John of Monmouth with Gillian Spraggs and Shani Oates	Ethan Doyle White
2012	14.1	In Defense of Pagan Studies: A Response to Davidsen's Critique	Ethan Doyle White
		Modern Latvian Paganism: Some Introductory Remarks	Michael F. Strmiska
		The Dievturi Movement in the Reports of the Latvian Political Police (1939-1940)	Anita Stasulane
		Representation of Nature Spirits and Gods in Latvian Art in the First Half of the Twentieth Century	Kristine Ogle
		The Mythology of Ethnic Identity and the Establishing of Modern Holy Places in Post-Soviet Latvia	Rūta Muktupāvela
		Gleb Botkin and the Church of Aphrodite	Dmitry Galtsin
		Birds, Liminality, and Human Transformation: An Animist Perspective on New Animism	Brian Anthony Taylor
		The Pagan Explosion Revisited: A Statistical Postmortem on the Teen Witch Fad	James R. Lewis
		The Gatherings of the Elders: The Beginnings of a Pagan International	Koenraad Elst
		<i>Druids: A Very Short Introduction</i> , By Barry Cunliffe	Miranda Aldhouse-Green
		<i>Bull of Heaven: The Mythic Life of Eddie Buczynski and the Rise of the New York Pagan</i> , By Michael G. Lloyd	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>The Sign of the Witch: Modernity and the Pagan Revival</i> , By David Waldron	Marisol Charbonneau
<i>Magic in the New Testament: A Survey and Appraisal of the Evidence</i> , By Robert Conner	Eric Northway		

		<i>Witchfather: A Life of Gerald Gardner, Volumes 1 and 2</i> , By Philip Heselton	Ethan Doyle White
	14.2	Introduction: Paganism, Initiation, and Ritual	Christian Giudice and Henrik Bogdan
		How to Become a Mage (or Fairy): Joséphin Péladan's Initiation for the Masses	Sasha Chaitow
		Pagan Rome was Rebuilt in a Play: Roggero Musmeci Ferrari Bravo and the Representation of Rumon	Christian Giudice
		Cleanliness is Next to Godliness, But Oaths are for Horses: Antecedents and Consequences of the Institutionalization of Secrecy in Initiatory Wicca	Léon van Gulik
		The Law of the Jungle: Self and Community in the Online Therianthropy Movement	Venetia Laura Delano Robertson
		Meeting Freya and the Cailleich, Celebrating Life and Death: Rites of Passage Beyond Dutch Contemporary Pagan Community	Hanneke Minkjan
		Review Article: 'Mummers, Maypoles, and Milkmaids: A Journey Through the English Ritual Year'	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>Queer Women and Religious Individualism</i> , By Melissa M. Wilcox	Rachel Morgain
		<i>Sweeping the Way: Divine Transformation in the Aztec Festival of Ochpaniztli</i> , By Catherine R. DiCesare	Susana Perea-Fox
		<i>Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction, and Faith</i> , By Carole M. Cusack	Christine Hoff Kraemer
		<i>The Old Ones in the Old Book: Pagan Roots of the Hebrew Old Testament</i> , By Philip West	Stephanie Lynn Budin
		<i>Re-Riting Woman: Dianic Wicca and the Feminine Divine</i> , By Kristy S. Coleman	Michelle Mueller
2013	15.1-2	Editor's Note	Chas S. Clifton
		Introduction: Gender in Contemporary Paganism and Esotericism	Manon Hedenborg-White and Inga Bårdsen Tollefsen
		Gender in Russian Rodnoverie	Kaarina Aitamurto
		God Giving Birth! - Connecting British Wicca with Radical Feminism and Goddess Spirituality during the 1970s-1980s: The Case Study of Monica Sjöö	Shai Feraro
		Gender and Paganism in Census and Survey Data	James R. Lewis and Inga Bårdsen Tollefsen
		A Lokian Family: Queer and Pagan Agency in Montreal	Martin Lepage

		To Him the Winged Secret Flame, To Her the Stooping Starlight: The Social Construction of Gender in Contemporary Ordo Templi Orientis	Manon Hedenborg-White
		Dancing in a Universe of Light and Shadows	Nikki Bado
		An Intersubjective Critique of a Critique of Pagan Scholarship	Michael York
		Navigating Praxis: Pagan Studies vs. Esoteric Studies	Amy Hale
		Response to the Panel, "'What is Wrong with Pagan Studies?' Critiquing Methodologies'"	Shawn Arthur
		Pagan Prayer and Worship: A Qualitative Study of Perceptions	Janet Goodall, Emyr Williams, and Catherine Goodall
		Orientalism in Iamblichus' The Mysteries	Sarah Lynn Veale
		Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors Among Pagans	Deirdre Sommerlad-Rogers
		The Transvaluation of 'Soul' and 'Spirit': Platonism and Paulism in HP Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled	Christopher A. Plaisance
		Beyond Hogwarts: Higher Education and Contemporary Pagans	James R. Lewis and Sverre Andreas Fekjan
		<i>Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music</i> , Edited by Donna Weston and Andy Bennett	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations</i> , By Carole M. Cusack	Lauren Bernauer
		<i>Cultivating the Sacred: Ritual Creativity and Practice Among Women in Contemporary Europe</i> , By Asa Trulsson	Wendy Griffin
		<i>Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France</i> , By Anna Fedele	Amy Renee Whitehead
		<i>Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition</i> , By Alison Butler	Leo Ruickbie
		<i>Crafting Contemporary Pagan Identities in a Catholic Society</i> , By Kathryn Rountree	Jenny Butler
		<i>Gentlemen and Amazons: The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1861-1900</i> , By Cynthia Eller	Laurel Zwissler
		<i>Aleister Crowley: The Biography</i> , By Tobias Churton; <i>Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism</i> , Edited by Henrik Bogdan and Martin P. Starr	Ethan Doyle White
2014	16.1	Deepening Conversations between Ritual Studies and Pagan Studies	Michelle Mueller
		Becoming a Virtual Pagan: 'Conversion' or Identity Construction?	James R. Lewis
		Prevalence and Importance of Contemporary Pagan Practices	Gwendolyn Reece
		The Search for 'Meaning': Occult Redefinitions and the Internet	Morandir Armson

		Healing Community: Pagan Cultural Models and Experiences in Seeking Well-Being	Kimberly D. Kirner
		<i>Stealing Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Modern Western Magic</i> , By Nevill Drury	Jason W. Mankey
		<i>Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Shamanism, and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Scotland</i> , By Emma Wilby	Melissa Harrington
		<i>Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics</i> , By Marco Pasi	Sarah Veale
		<i>Divining the Self: A Study in Yoruba Myth and Human Consciousness</i> , By Velma E. Love	Daniel Foor
		<i>Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia</i> , Valerie Kivelson	Ronald Hutton
		<i>Afro-Cuban Religious Arts: Popular Expressions of Cultural Inheritance in Espiritismo and Santeria</i> , By Kristine Juncker	Christopher W. Chase
	16.2	Pagan Studies: In Defense of Pluralism	Douglas Ezzy
		Impediments to Practices in Contemporary Paganism	Gwendolyn Reece
		You took My Spirit Captive among the Leaves': The Creation of Blodeuwedd in Re-Imaginations of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi	Cara Bartels-Bland
		Conversion as Colonization: Pagan Reconstructionism and Ethnopsychiatry	Anne Ferlat
		The Cult of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Gods in Brazilian Wicca: Symbols and Practices	Daniela Cordovil
		<i>Sex, Death, and Witchcraft: A Contemporary Pagan Festival</i> , By Douglas Ezzy	Jodie Ann Vann
		<i>Pagan Family Values: Childhood and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary American Paganism</i> , By S. Zohreh Kermani	Michelle Mueller
		<i>Witchcraft and the Rise of the First Confucian Empire</i> , By Liang Cai	Shawn Arthur
		<i>The Handbook of Contemporary Animism</i> , Edited by Graham Harvey	Susan Greenwood
		<i>Household and Family Religion in Antiquity</i> , Edited by John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan	Caroline Jane Tully
2015	17.1-2	A Double Issue of The Pomegranate: The First Decades of Contemporary Pagan Studies	Chas S. Clifton
		The Divine Feminine in the Silver Age of Russian Culture and Beyond: Vladimir Soloviev, Vasily rozanov, and Dmitry Merezhkovsky	Dmitry Galtsin
		Elements of Magic, Esotericism, and Religion in Shaktism and Tantrism in Light of the Shakti Pitha Kāmākhya	Archana Barua
		Special Section - Paths into Pagan Studies: Autobiographical Reflections	

Book Review	Special Issue/Section
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		The Pagan Studies Archipelago: Pagan Studies in a Cosmopolitan World	Douglas Ezzy
		The Old Pomegranate and the New	Fritz Muntean
		Walking Widdershins	Wendy Griffin
		Playing Croquet with Hedgehogs: (Still) Becoming a Scholar of Paganism and Animism	Graham Harvey
		Navigating Academia and Spirituality from a Pagan Perspective	Michael York
		An Outsider Inside: Becoming a Scholar of Contemporary Paganism	Helen A. Berger
		The Owl, the Dragon and the Magician: Reflections on Being an Anthropologist Studying Magic	Susan Greenwood
		The Academy, the Otherworld, and Between	Kathryn Rountree
		Making the Strange Familiar	Sarah M. Pike
		Reflecting on Studying Wicca from within the Academy and the Craft: An Autobiographical Perspective	Melissa Harrington
		Pagan(ish) Senses and Sensibilities	Adrian Ivakhiv
2016	18.1	A Hackney Disciple of the Beast 666: A History in Letters	Christopher Josiffe
		Theoretical, Terminological, and Taxonomic Trouble in the Academic Study of Contemporary Paganism: A Case for Reform	Ethan Doyle White
		Contemporary Pagans and Stigmatized Identity	Gwendolyn Reece
		<i>Witches of America</i> , By Alex Mar	Mary Catherine Hamner
		<i>Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium</i> , Edited by Patrick Curry	Doe Daughtrey
		<i>Sexuality, Religion, and the Sacred: Bisexual, Pansexual, and Polysexual Perspectives</i> , Edited by Loraine Hutchines and H. Sharif Williams	Christine Hoff Kraemer
		<i>Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esotericism</i> , By Arthur Versluis	Melissa Harrington
		<i>Doreen Valiente: Witch</i> , By Philip Heselton	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>Eros and Touch from a Pagan Perspective: Divided for Love's Sake</i> , By Christine Hoff Kraemer	Constance Wise
		<i>Asatru: A Native European Spirituality</i> , By Stephen A. McNallen	Jefferson F. Calico
		18.2	The Image of Paganism in the Age of Reason: From Idolatry Towards a Secular Concept of Polytheism
The Seduction of Avalon: The Pilgrimage to Goddess and the Affect of the Tour	Christina Beard-Moose		
Witches' Tears: Spiritual Feminism, Epistemology, and Witch Hunt Horror Stories	Laurel Zwissler		

		Review Article: Witches, Pagans, and Historians - An Extended Review of Max Dashu, <i>Witches and Pagans: Women in European Folk Religion, 700-1000</i>	Ronald Hutton
		<i>Magic in the Cloister: Pious Motives, Illicit Interests, and Occult Approaches to the Medieval Universe</i> , By Sophie Page	Egil Aspren
		<i>Virgin Mother Goddesses of Antiquity</i> , By Marguerite Rigoglioso	Lisa Crandall
		<i>Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia</i> , Edited by Michael DJ Bintley and Thomas JT Williams	Carole M. Cusack
		<i>Witches and Demons: A Comparative Perspective on Witchcraft and Satanism</i> , By Jean La Fontaine	Ethan Doyle White
		<i>Smoke Signals for the Gods: Ancient Greek Sacrifice from the Archaic through Roman Periods</i> , By FS Naiden	Sam Webster
2017	19.1	Discourses of Paganism in the British and Irish Press During the Early Pagan Revival	G.J. Wheeler
		Pagan Leaders and Clergy: A Quantitative Exploration	Gwendolyn Reece
		From Folklore to Esotericism and Back: Neo-Paganism in Serbia	Nemanja Radulovic
		Contemporary Germanic/Norse Paganism and Recent Survey Data	Joshua Marcus Cragle
		<i>American Heathens: The Politics of Identity in a Pagan Religious Movement</i> , By Jennifer Snook	Barbara Jane Davy
		<i>Magic in the Modern World: Strategies of Repression and Legitimization</i> , Edited by Edward Bever and Randall Styers	Michael D. Bailey
		<i>Inka Human Sacrifice and Mountain Worship: Strategies for Empire Unification</i> , By Thomas Besom	Caroline Jane Tully
		<i>Nordic Neoshamanisms</i> , Edited by Siv Ellen Kraft, Trude Fonneland, and James R. Lewis	Robert J. Wallis
		<i>Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion</i> , By Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús	Rose T. Caraway
	19.2	The Image of Paganism in the British Romanticism	Pavel Horák
		Field Report - New Age Movements, Occultism, and Spiritualism Research Library: The Making of a Pagan Archive	Guy Frost
		Special Section - Paganism and Politics	
		Paganism and Politics: A View from Central-Eastern Europe	Michael F. Strmiska
		Pagan Terror: The Role of Pagan Ideology in Church Burnings and the 1990s Norwegian Black Metal Subculture	Miroslav Vrzal
		Women of Power: The Image of the Witch and Feminist Movements in Poland	Adam Anczyk and Joanna Malita-Król

Book Review	Special Issue/Section
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		Religious Socio-Cultural and Political Worldviews of Contemporary Pagans in the Czech Republic	Matouš Vencálek	
		<i>Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Paganism</i> , By Stefanie von Schnurbein	Jefferson F. Calico	
		<i>Plato's Gods</i> , By Gerd van Riel	Carole M. Cusack	
		<i>Astronomy and Ceremony in the Prehistoric Southwest: Revisited</i> , Edited by Gregory E. Munson, Todd W. Bostwick, and Tony Hull	John McHugh	
		<i>Lost Envoy: The Tarot Deck of Austin Osman Spears</i> , Edited by Jonathan Allen	Carole M. Cusack	
		Special Section - Paganism and Politics		
2018	20.1	Pagan Politics in the 21st Century: 'Peace and Love' or 'Blood and Soil?'	Michael F. Strmiska	
		Czech Pagans' Views on Extremism	Jan Merička and Josef Smolik	
		The Decline of Contemporary Celtic Paganism in the Czech Republic: Factors in the Growth and Erosion of Czech Celtophilia	Jan Reichstätter	
		Participation of Contemporary Pagans in Heritage Politics of Lithuania	Eglė Aleknaitė	
		<i>Defining Magic: A Reader</i> , Edited by Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg	Carole M. Cusack	
		<i>The Final Pagan Generation</i> , By Edward J. Watts	Chas S. Clifton	
		<i>Spirits Without Borders: Vietnamese Spirit Mediums in a Transnational Age</i> , By Karen Fjelstad and Nguyen Thi Hien	Matt Coward	
		<i>Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth</i> , By Mark Williams	Carole M. Cusack	
		<i>Contemporary Shamanisms in Norway: Religion, Entrepreneurship, and Politics</i> , By Trude Fonneland	Robert J. Wallis	
		<i>The Dancing Goddess: Folklore, Archaeology, and the Origins of European Dance</i> , By Elizabeth Wayland Barber	Ana Camillo	
		20.2	On the Agony of Czech Slavic Paganism and the Representation of One's Own Funeral Among Contemporary Czech Pagans	Giuseppe Maiello
			An Esbat Among the Quads: An Episode of Witchcraft at Oxford University in the 1920s	Graham John Wheeler
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			Claiming Europe: Celticity in Russian Pagan and Nativist Movement (1990s-2010s)	Dmitry Galtsin
The Hunt for Lost Identity: Native Faith Paganism in Contemporary Lithuania	Dalia Senvaitytė			

		<i>A Historical Introduction to the Study of New Religious Movements</i> , By W. Michael Ashcraft	Carole M. Cusack
		<i>African Personality and Spirituality: The Role of Abosom and Human Essence</i> , By Anthony Ephirim-Donkor	Douglas Ficek
		<i>Being Viking: Heathenry in Contemporary America</i> , By Jefferson F. Calico	Galina Krasskova
2019	21.1	Fallen Soldiers and the Gods: Religious Considerations in the Retrieval and Burial of the War Dead in Classical Greece	Sarah Lynn Veale
		Attitudes Towards Potential Harmful Magical Practices in Contemporary Paganism - A Survey	Bethan Juliet Oake
		Spiritual Pizzica: A Southern Italian Perspective on Contemporary Paganism	Giovanna Parmigiani
		The Ethics of Pagan Ritual	Douglas Ezzy
		The Most Powerful Portal in Zion' - Kursi: The Spiritual Site that Became an Intersection of Ley-lines and Multicultural Discourses	Marianna Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Adi Sasson
		<i>The Northern Dawn: A History of the Reawakening of the Germanic Spirit, Volume 1: From the Twilight of the Gods to the Sun at Midnight</i> , By Stephen Edred Flowers	Jefferson F. Calico
		<i>Children in Minority Religions: Growing Up in Controversial Religious Groups</i> , By Liselotte Frisk, Sanja Nilsson, and Peter Åkerbäck	Carole M. Cusack
		<i>The Witch: A History of Fear, From Ancient Times to the Present</i> , By Ronald Hutton	Chas S. Clifton
			Special Issue - Paganism, Art, and Fashion
	21.2	Introduction to the Special Issue of The Pomegranate on Paganism, Art, and Fashion	Caroline Jane Tully
		Feminist Interpretations of Witches and the Witch Craze in Contemporary Art by Women	Katy Deepwell
		High Glamour: Magical Clothing and Talismanic Fashion	Charlotte Rodgers
		Hashtag Heathens: Contemporary Germanic Pagan Feminine Visuals on Instagram	Ross Downing
		Wolves Amongst Sheep: Looking Beyond the Aesthetics of Polish National Socialism	Mariusz Filip
		The Morrigan as a 'Dark Goddess': A Goddess Re-Imagined Through Therapeutic Self-Narration of Women on Social Media	Áine Warren
Getting it Wrong: The Problems with Reinventing the Past		Diana Purkiss	
<i>Runic Book of Days: A Guide to Living the Annual Cycle of Rune Magick</i> , By S. Kelley Harrell; <i>Runic Lore & Legend: Wyrdstaves of Old Northumbria</i> , By Nigel Pennick		Jefferson F. Calico	

		<i>Legible Religion: Books, Gods, and Rituals in Roman Culture</i> , By Duncan Macrae	Norman Simms
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		Contemporary Paganism in Portugal: The Case of the Pagan Federation International	Daniela Cordovil
		Structures of Stability: A Blackian Analysis of a Wiccan Coven's Longevity	Jeff Patterson
		Duhovi Rastlin, Duša Stare Vere: The Use of Plants in Sacred Rituals Among Nature Worshippers in Slovenia	Karsten Fatur
		As Old as Man': Helena Blavatsky's Pagan Perennial Philosophy	Julie Chajes
		<i>Mosaics of Faith: Floors of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land</i> , By Rina Talgam	Norman Simms
		<i>Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World</i> , By Tim Whitmarsh	Norman Simms
	22.2	Who Is, and Who Is Not a Pagan? Struggles in Defining Contemporary Paganism: A Response to Ethan Doyle White	Pavel Horák
		Where Are There Sacred Mountains and What Makes Them Magical? A Material Religion Perspective	Michael York
		The Native Faith Group Veles: A Case Study of Slovene Contemporary Paganism	Nejc Petric and Mirjana Borenović
		Hellenismos: Texts in the Contemporary Worship of the Ancient Greek Gods in North America	Stian Sundell Torjussen
		The Shaymaran: Philosophy, Resistance, and the Defeat of the Lost Goddess of Kurdistan	Dilşa Deniz
		<i>A Goddess in Motion: Visual Creativity in the Cult of María Lionza</i> , By Roger Canals	Jip Lensink
		<i>The Dark Lord: H.P. Lovecraft, Kenneth Grant, and the Typhonian Tradition in Magic</i> , By Peter Levenda; <i>Servants of the Star & the Snake: Essays in Honour of Kenneth and Steffi Grant</i> , Edited by Henrik Bogdan	Richard Kaczynski
		<i>The Witches' Ointment: The Secret of Psychedelic Magic</i> , By Thomas Hatsis; <i>Psychedelic Mystery Traditions: Spirit Plants, Magical Practices, Ecstatic States</i> , By Thomas Hatsis	Chas S. Clifton

Appendix D – Pagan Studies Courses across Canadian Universities

Figure 1 – Pagan Studies Courses listed by University

School	Title	Department
Acadia University	“Cults” New Religious Movements	Religious Studies
Acadia University	The Sociology of Magic and Religion	Sociology
Athabasca University	Goddess Mythology, Women's Spirituality, and Ecofeminism	Women and Gender Studies
Bishop's University	The Goddess: History, Cult and Myth	Religious Studies/Classics
Brandon University	North American Gods	Religious Studies
Brandon University	Contemporary Goddess Religion	Women and Gender Studies
Cape Breton University	Cults: New Religious Movements	Religious Studies
Capilano University	Anthropology of Religion	Anthropology
Capilano University	Women and Religion	Women and Gender Studies
Concordia University	Goddesses and Religious Images of Women	Religious Studies
Concordia University	Introduction to Women and Religion	Religious Studies
Dalhousie University	Paganism	Religious Studies
McMaster University	Religion, Magic and Witchcraft	Religious Studies/Anthropology
McMaster University	Images of the Divine Feminine	Religious Studies/Women and Gender
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Contemporary Religious Movements	Religious Studies
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Contemporary Alternative Spirituality	Religious Studies
Mount Royal University	Anthropology of Religion	Anthropology
Mount Royal University	Esotericism, Magic & Occult	Religious Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University	Myths, Visions, Possessions	Religious Studies
Nipissing University	Cults and New Religious Movements	Religious Studies
Saint Francis Xavier University	Celtic Paganism	Celtic Studies/Religion

School	Title	Department
Saint Francis Xavier University	Cults and Alternative Religions	Religious Studies
Simon Fraser University	Symbol, Myth and Meaning	Sociology/Anthropology
Université de Moncton	Women and Spirituality	Religious Studies
Université de Sherbrooke	Women and Religions: Cultural and Religious Issues	Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences
Université de Sherbrooke	Women, Religions and Spiritualities	Religious Studies
Université Laval	Insights into Esotericism	Religious Studies
University of Alberta	Anthropology of Religion	Anthropology
University of Alberta	Studies in Witchcraft and the Occult	Religious Studies
University of British Columbia	Witches, Vampires, and Zombies: Anthropology of the Supernatural	Anthropology
University of British Columbia	Witches: Myth and Reality	Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies
University of Ottawa	Witchcraft, Magic and Occult Traditions	Religious Studies
University of Prince Edward Island	Cults, Sects, New Religions	Religious Studies
University of Prince Edward Island	Alternative Spiritualities	Religious Studies
University of Regina	Cults or New Religious Movements	Religious Studies
University of Saskatchewan	Goddesses in Myth and History	Religious Studies
University of Victoria	Magic, Mysticism and the Occult	Religious Studies
University of Waterloo	Anthropology of Religion	Religious Studies/Anthropology
University of Waterloo	Cults and New Religious Movements	Religious Studies/Sociology
Vancouver Island University	Emerging Religions	Religious Studies
Wilfrid Laurier University	Cults, Sects and New Religious Movements	Religious Studies

Figure 2 – Pagan Studies Courses in Canada by Theme (N = 41)

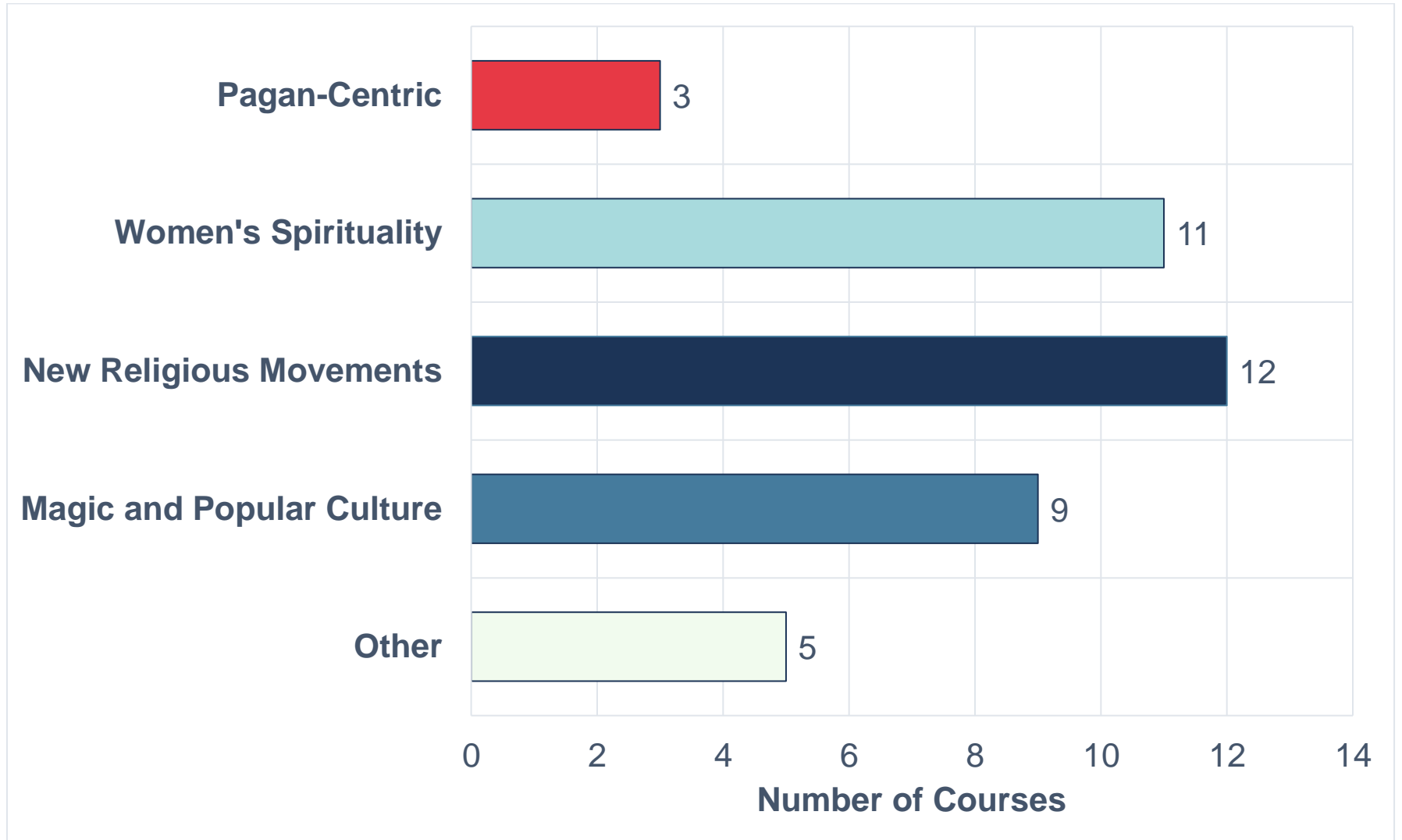
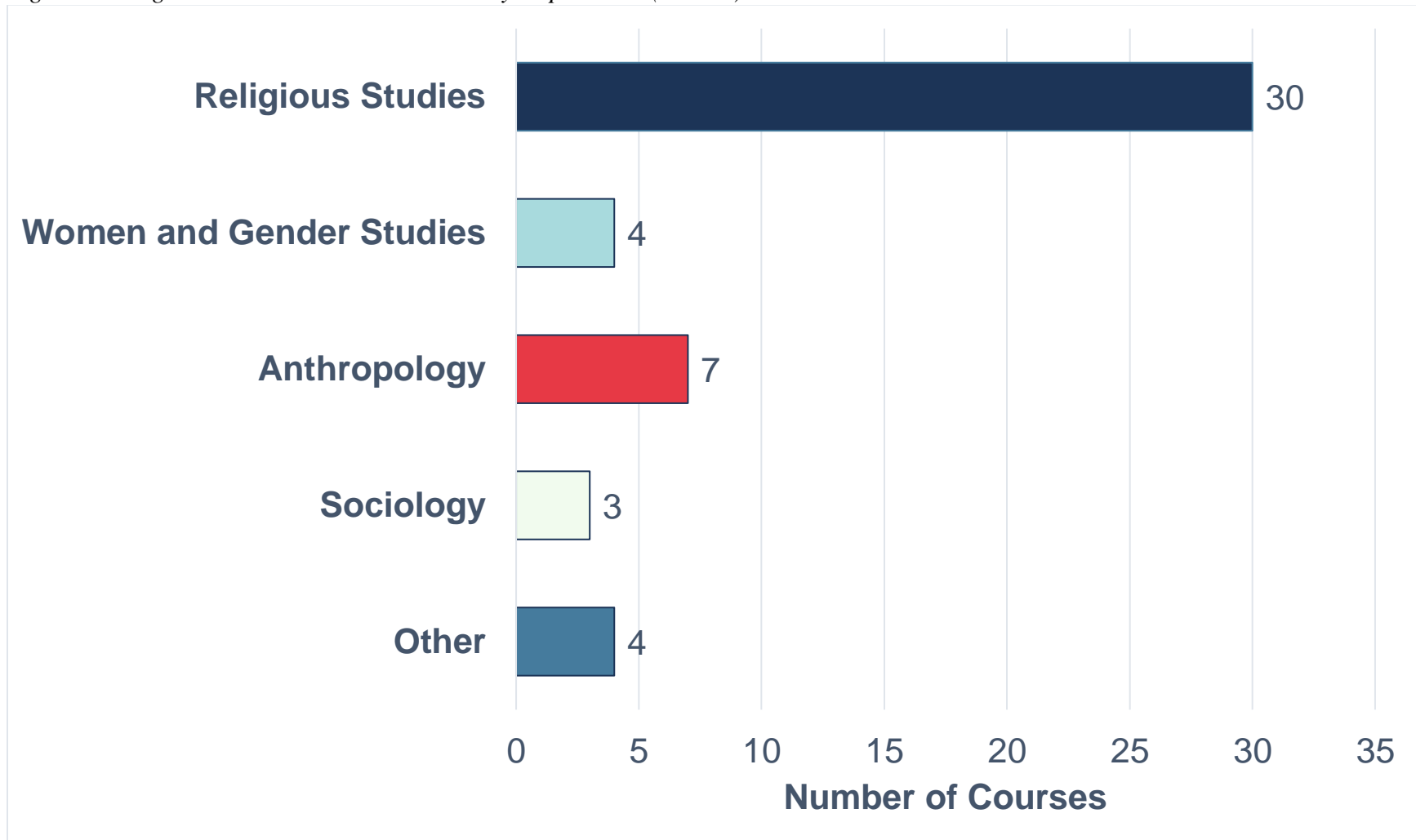


Figure 3 – Pagan Studies Courses in Canada by Department (N = 41)



Note. Some courses are cross-listed in multiple departments, and occupy more than one category.