



## A changing of the guard

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## A changing of the guard

*Religion, Brain & Behavior* is now in its 12th year of publication. We are pleased with *RBB*'s growth, and its meteoric rise to the #2 journal for citations out of nearly 600 religion journals tracked by CiteSource. But, while the journal is getting older, so are its editors. All of the current editors have been along for the entire (glorious) *RBB* journey, either as editors, or first as editorial board members and then as editors. While none of the editors is retiring immediately, we have been planning how to pass the journal on to the next generation of scholars. With that in mind, over the next several years we hope to bring aboard several new co-editors who will eventually take over the *RBB* reins.

Our first step in this transition has been to invite John Shaver, Associate Professor in the Anthropology of Religion at the University of Otago, to join our editorial team. This was an easy and obvious choice. John has been a dedicated *RBB* editorial board member for years and he has been providing insightful and thorough reviews for us throughout the lifetime of the journal. In truth, John has already been serving as a co-editor of *RBB* for nearly a year but prior editorial commitments have prevented us from formally introducing him to the *RBB* community, although admittedly, John needs no introduction in our field.

John received his PhD in anthropology at the University of Connecticut in 2012. His dissertation, *The Behavioral Ecology of Fijian Religion*, and subsequent publications from this research established John as a consummate fieldworker. He is best known for his fieldwork in Fiji over the past decade, but he has also conducted ethnographic, demographic, and experimental work in the Czech Republic, the Gambia, Mauritius, New Zealand, and the United States.

John's work is mostly concerned with understanding the relationships between social inequality, cooperation, and conflict. The breadth of his research, especially for a young scholar, is remarkable. It includes pioneering studies on the hierarchical consequences of kava drinking rituals in Fiji (Shaver, 2015; Shaver & Sosis, 2014), prejudice against Muslims in New Zealand (Shaver, Troughton et al., 2016; Shaver et al., 2017), and experimental studies on trust within Greek fraternities in the United States (Shaver et al., 2018). John has also made important theoretical contributions to the use of life history theory and signaling theory in the study of religion (Shaver & Bulbulia, 2016, 2017; Shaver, Purzycki et al., 2016).

John's recent research focuses on how religion impacts maternal fertility as well as maternal and child health, and how these dynamics influence population change and global health. To that end, he is the principal investigator of a five-year Templeton-funded project: *The Evolutionary Dynamics of Religion, Family Size, and Child Success*. This project seeks to understand issues of reproductive decision-making and children's health, growth, and education. It addresses a puzzle, known as the "paradox of religious fertility," that John himself introduced to the academic literature as a Hilbert Problem in the pages of *RBB* (Shaver, 2017). In short, many religious families throughout the world have large family sizes and typically, because resources are finite, there is a negative relationship between family size and child success on education and health measures. But large family size does not seem to negatively impact religious children. One possible solution to this paradox, which the *Evolutionary Dynamics* project has begun to explore, is the role of alloparenting (Shaver et al., 2019; Spake et al., 2021). Ongoing cross-cultural work in this project will evaluate the impact

of allocare on family size across religious communities in India, Bangladesh, Malawi, The Gambia, and Pittsburgh.

John's service commitments are as impressive as his research accomplishments. He currently serves as the President of the International Association for the Cognitive and Evolutionary Sciences of Religion and he was formerly the President of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions. He also sits on the advisory board of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study. At the University of Otago, John served as Head of the Religious Studies department from 2018–2022. Under John's leadership, the department revitalized the curriculum, developed effective strategic cases for new faculty hires, and significantly grew student interest.

We are fortunate that John is willing to add one more service contribution to our field: co-editor of *RBB*. We greatly look forward to working with him in the years ahead.

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