

The Evolution of American Airport Chapels: Local Negotiations in Religiously Pluralistic Contexts

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I. Introduction

More than 250,000 passengers and 30,000 employees pass through Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta every day. Like a small city, the airport complex covers 6.8 million square feet and has several fire departments, a hairdresser, a walk-in health clinic, food available 24/7, and, since 1981, a chapel.¹ Today there are three chapels, two on the secure side and one before passengers pass through security. People moving through the airport might converse with Chester Cook, one of two airport chaplains who receive financial support or one of forty chaplaincy volunteers. If passengers fly from Atlanta to New York's JFK airport, Boston's Logan airport, or Chicago's O'Hare airport, they might see Catholic airport chapels or Catholic priest-chaplains when they land. If they fly to Denver International, Seattle-Tacoma International, or a range of other large American cities, they will find multifaith chapels, some staffed by chaplains or volunteers and others not staffed at all.

Religious studies scholars, including those who are frequent flyers, rarely write about airport chapels or the multitude of other public institutions in the contemporary United States where religion makes frequent, if sometimes quiet, physical appearances. From healthcare organizations to universities to prisons, religion is present in a broader range of places than the congregations and religious organizations where religious studies scholars traditionally look.² Small—but growing—bodies of literature delineate the history and appearance of religion in some public institutions but rarely consider the socio-cultural factors that influence the construction of actual physical spaces for religion and how they were created in different types of public institutions.³ By not asking these questions, scholars miss a chance to think about how religious spaces were constructed and how they vary over time and across sectors. Some

scholars, often social scientists, have described specific spaces—typically called chapels, prayer rooms, or meditation rooms—in universities, healthcare organizations, and prison, but little is known analytically about how and why they developed over time.⁴

Some of these spaces, like Muslim prayer rooms in hospitals, are new while others have long histories. Some early American hospitals had chapels, for example, while others did not. Since 1955, there has been a prayer room in the U.S. Capitol, and chaplains have long started every session of Congress with a prayer.⁵ Chapels have also long been present in the American military, which regulates their design and construction. The air force, army, and navy each have specific guidelines about chapel spaces, specifying where they can be located, the amount of space that should be allotted for them, and what can, cannot, and must be included inside.⁶ These guidelines address religious diversity by requiring chapel spaces to be outwardly neutral and devoid of symbols specific to particular religious traditions in an effort to accommodate people of diverse faiths.⁷

In the British context, Sophie Gillat-Ray has charted a transition from chapels to prayer rooms over time across a range of institutions. Such spaces are today used for a broader range of religious and spiritual purposes than they were historically. Such conceptual changes have led to new political struggles, she argues, particularly around ownership, appropriation, and design.⁸ Growing religious diversity in the U.K. and U.S., including increasing numbers of people who claim no religious affiliation, put real and symbolic pressure on the institutions that house many of these spaces raising cultural and legal questions about the constitutionality of chapel spaces, how they are used, and how they developed historically.⁹

I focus on American airport chapels as a unique case study like but in some ways quite distinct from chapels in prisons, healthcare organizations, and other settings.¹⁰ At first blush an unusual location for thinking about religion, airports are liminal—for some anxiety producing—spaces that have not infrequently been sites of on the ground religious struggles and debates. From questions about whether Hare Krishnas can chant in the Los Angeles airport to questions about where observant Jewish men can pray on El Al flights (and where women can sit), air travel brings out religious challenges among other litanies of complaints.¹¹ As liminal spaces, airports facilitate transition, raise existential issues about safety, gravity, and flight, and reveal the anxieties around such issues many travelers experience in the process.¹² By serving as the literal gateways to flight, airports disrupt deep-seated norms on the ground and point to the multiple challenges inherent in travel. Scholars have described airports, often

distant from city centers, as tense public spaces, especially since 9/11 due to security, passengers' rights, and symbolic contests around a range of issues.¹³ The mobility and transition inherent in airports and air travel mark these spaces as distinct from related spaces in prisons and other grounded institutions. In addition, chapels in airports are distinct from those in prisons and the military by not being formally regulated by state or federal policies about religion.

Since 1951, when the Archdiocese of Boston opened the first airport chapel in the United States, tensions around the appropriate place for religion—and increasingly spirituality—in such spaces have been ongoing. Airports chapels are today quite varied in physical appearance, financial resources, and in the rules that govern how travelers and staff use them. Most Americans know little about airport chapels or the chaplains present in many airports, despite their growing numbers.¹⁴ Few are aware of the Fellowship of Christian Airport Personnel, growing numbers of airport yoga rooms, or the ways some airports accommodate Muslim cab drivers by being sure they have a dry (if not warm) place to pray.¹⁵ As Max Weber argues, religion is not only congregational but also emerges in multiple forms under particular social and historical circumstances.¹⁶ Paying attention to religion in airports and other public spaces points to the social and historical factors that shape how it operates and is negotiated in public, seemingly secular spaces.

I focus on the history and design of airport chapels to make two distinct arguments. First, I trace the history of chapel spaces in airports showing an evolution from Catholic-centered chapels to more multifaith ones to more religiously inclusive spaces. I view these spaces as analytic mirrors for demographic and cultural changes in American religion in the past sixty years. Second, I view airports as a single organizational field or set of organizations that, according to sociologists Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, are involved in common efforts distinct from other organizations.¹⁷ Such organizational fields result from a process Anthony Giddens calls structuration in which organizations interact with one another, establish structures of domination and patterns or coalition, respond to increasing amounts of information, and become aware that they are involved in a common endeavor.¹⁸ I view airport chapels and chaplaincy as a single organizational field related to, yet distinct from chapels, and chaplaincy in other sectors such as healthcare, the military, or prisons.¹⁹ Using insights from field theory in sociology I argue that airport chapels as a group are much less similar—institutionally isomorphic—and more varied than one might expect. This is caused by the intensely local nature of these spaces, the lack of consistent policies governing them,

and little consistent education among the people who started and tend them. Many are also shaped as much by trying to avoid potential conflict as by responses to actual conflicts. As in Isaac Weiner's book, *Religion Out Loud*, my approach reveals the multiple, messy, conflicting ways religious pluralism is worked out on the ground in different local contexts.²⁰ I tell this story by focusing mostly on the history and design of airport chapels, leaving questions about the use and daily lived experience of these spaces to future researchers with more ethnographic data than mine.

II. A Brief History

The Early Years 1950–1970: Catholic Forerunners in the Era of Protestant-Catholic-Jew

Air travel for large segments of the population was new in the early 1950s when Boston Archbishop Richard J. Cushing decided to build Our Lady of the Airways, a Catholic chapel at Logan airport.²¹ Primarily concerned about Catholic staff working long shifts at the airport without the opportunity to attend mass, Cushing aimed to bring the celebration of mass to the workers. Cushing brought priests to the airport and to other venues as he built workers' chapels in the port, train station, and other venues across Boston. These chapels also helped Cushing solve the problem of surplus priests created as soldiers and military chaplains returned to Boston from World War II. The airport chaplaincy and others provided postings for these priests while expanding services to Boston Catholics as well as Catholic airline staff and others who traveled through Logan International Airport.²²

At Logan, a small circular "Our Lady of the Airways" chapel opened in 1951 and was renovated and expanded in 1965 to seat 250.²³ According to public accounts, airport personnel in heavily Catholic Boston allowed the archdiocese to create this space at the airport with no conflict over renting the municipally owned land. The 1965 Catholic chapel remains today with an altar and crucifix, stations of the cross, and holy water at the doors. The Eucharist is available in the chapel and mass is led regularly by the airport's Catholic chaplain-priest who is assigned by and accountable to the Boston archdiocese.²⁴ At some point, a prayer rug was added to the back corner of the chapel with a small, handwritten sign pointing toward Mecca in recognition of Muslim staff and travelers in need of a place to pray. Little public information is available about this addition or whether Muslims use this area, particularly given the Catholic icons in the space.

The chapel at Logan inspired the country's second airport chapel, "Our Lady of the Skies." Also Catholic, this chapel was built at Idlewild Airport—what is today John F. Kennedy International Airport—in New York City in the 1950s. Inspired by personal experience in World War II and the community of Catholic airport staff rather than by actions of the diocese in New York, the founding of this chapel was led by Bob O'Brien, a customs official. While on leave to serve in the army in Europe during World War II, he prayed under enemy fire to get out alive. Years later he saw "Our Lady of the Airways" in Boston and was inspired to organize Catholic staff at Idlewild Airport and build a chapel there. He helped start a Catholic guild at the airport in the early 1950s that formally communicated with the Catholic church in New York, raised funds, and lobbied for a local priest. Unlike in Boston, there is no evidence that Catholic leadership in New York was looking to place surplus priests after World War II, and it was many years before they formally placed a priest at the airport. Catholic guild leaders convinced a local restaurant to provide space for mass, and a priest celebrated mass there (using a mobile wooden altar built by airport carpenters) until the chapel was built in 1954 on leased land. Mass started in this new chapel in 1955 and was offered by priests from a local parish.²⁵ The guild's history suggests that hundreds of airport employees and travelers attended mass weekly in the early years. A unique image of Mary standing on a propeller came to represent the chapel and guild and remains today, even as the physical location of the chapel has changed.²⁶

The Catholic chapel at Idlewild, designed by architect George J. Sole, did not stand alone for long. By the end of 1958, the Protestant Council of the City of New York and the New York Board of Rabbis had both leased land at the airport in agreements identical to those reached with the Catholic guild. Debates about the specific location of these chapels and their designs took years. The eventual Jewish space, called the International Synagogue, was modeled after the Touro Synagogue in Newport and the Mill Street Synagogue in New York and seated 150. Its construction required overcoming multiple obstacles including objections from civil libertarians and protests by Orthodox Jews about who would operate the Jewish space. The Protestant chapel was designed by architect Edgar Tafel in the shape of a Latin cross and seated 250 people. It had a floating A frame structure design which was in contrast to the flat-roofed "lozenge-shape" buildings designed by architects Bloch and Hesse for the International Synagogue. The chapels were not directly connected to the terminals and actually stood in a row at some distance from them.²⁷

Much about this process parallels Will Herberg's description of the Protestant-Catholic-Jew nature of religion at the time.²⁸ Like the chapels at Brandeis University, these three chapels were constructed with much interfaith cooperation but little ongoing connection among the three religious communities that developed. Even at the dedication ceremony in October of 1966, the three communities separated to do their own services after Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey dedicated the chapels as a group stating that they represented "a symbol of the essential unity of our great religions, and a pledge of their determination to make this a better nation and a better world."²⁹ These three chapels remained at JFK until the mid-1980s when the lease on the land expired and they were razed for airport expansion.³⁰

In addition to the ones in Boston and New York, several other Catholic airport chapels were opened in the 1960s in response to requests from Catholic workers in cities with large Catholic populations. Mirroring changes in the Catholic church following Vatican II, these chapels brought mass in English to workers in their workplaces. In Chicago, Michael Zaniolo, the Catholic priest-chaplain at Chicago's O'Hare airport, explains that Catholics working at the airport on 24-hour shifts in the early 1960s "asked a priest at the neighboring parish if he would come over and say mass for them. . . .at that time the police had 24 hour shifts, the firemen had 24 hour shifts and the airlines had rotating shifts." This priest had what Father Zaniolo jokingly called "jet fuel" in his blood, and he continued saying mass, baptizing babies, and marrying people until staff petitioned the cardinal to have him appointed to the airport full time in 1966.³¹ At this time, the cardinal also set up the O'Hare Airport Chapel as a kind of nonresidential parish where Catholics could receive the sacraments and have access to a priest.

A similar process took place at the Newark International Airport when Catholic employees of Pan Am airlines recruited a local Catholic priest to offer mass. They built an altar on wheels that was stored in the closet of an airport restaurant when not in use. A Catholic priest-chaplain was formally appointed though it was not until the 1990s that he was able to secure space for a chapel, in part due to the generosity of one of the airlines in whose terminal it is located.³² There is no evidence of controversy in any of these cases or demands for chapel spaces or chaplains for people in addition to Catholics. Perhaps this suggests the general acceptance of religion or the specific ritual needs Catholics had for the mass distinct from the needs of Protestants and Jews at the time as well as distinct demographic realities in cities with large Catholic populations.

Catholic priests and, after 1969, members of other religious traditions working as airport chaplains began to organize in the 1960s and 1970s. Ten Catholic airport priests met in Brussels in 1967 and have continued meeting annually eventually evolving into a multireligious professional association, the International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains.³³ Their work was strengthened by the “Pontificia Commissio de Spirituali Migratorum atque Itinerantium Cura” established by Pope Paul VI in 1970 to study and provide pastoral care to people on the move including air travelers.³⁴ The civil aviation branch of the resulting Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People has been active developing materials, training chaplains, and providing various types of support since that time.³⁵ In the United States, Catholic chaplains created the National Conference of Catholic Chaplains, which meets regularly and publishes materials including a Catholic handbook for airport chaplaincy.³⁶

By the end of the 1960s, a handful of American airports had chapel spaces, the majority of which were started by Catholics for Catholic workers and travelers. While non-Catholics had built airport chapels at JFK and also in Denver, Houston, and a few other cities, it was Catholics during this period who perhaps most needed liturgical space for mass and/or had the infrastructure, funds, and people to provide such spaces. Such developments parallel and in some ways embody changes in Vatican II designed to bring mass to lay Catholics in as accessible a way as possible. The local congregations that developed around the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish chapels at JFK during this period were unusual and not a model for how more multifaith chapels would develop in other cities in coming decades.

Subsequent Decades, 1970–1990: Protestant and Multifaith Models

The declining significance of denominationalism and the growth of evangelical Christianity influenced the shape of airport chapels mostly started by Protestants in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁷ Such broad changes enabled Protestants to work together across denominational lines, particularly when linked by evangelical worldviews. Distinct from the centralized structure of the Catholic church, resources were often a challenge as were local negotiations with airport officials about physical space. Groups of local religious leaders or single individuals with specific (idiosyncratic) passions for the ministry tended to take the lead in these years creating chapel spaces (and chaplaincies) oriented more toward quiet prayer and individual reflection than organized religious services like for Catholics.

In Atlanta, for example, the first airport chapel was created in the early 1970s, but it was not until the 1980s that there was a sustained chaplain presence. Mayor Maynard Jackson granted space to a single individual and a Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta. An airport chapel was opened but quickly closed because the council did not have ongoing staff or resources to maintain it. In the spring of 1980, a distinctly interfaith group incorporated as the Interfaith Airport Chaplaincy under Georgia law with an initial board of directors that included one Protestant, one Catholic, and one Jew. They convinced one of the airlines to donate space for a small chapel that Chester Cook, the current chaplain, remembers as a “very small room” that was “multipurpose” and “didn’t have a slant toward any one religion.”³⁸ In 1981, a dedicated Protestant chaplain began to develop the chaplaincy at the airport.³⁹

At the Dallas airport, the chaplaincy was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1977 and opened a small chapel in the late 1970s that was demolished and rebuilt several years later in a new location after a major airline closed. Two other small chapels were also opened in different terminals of the Dallas airport in the 1980s. These spaces have tended to have altars, podiums, chairs or pews, and in some cases stained glass windows. While they were intended to be welcoming to all, they were more traditionally Protestant in design and appearance than chapels started by Catholics at other airports, and they were smaller—not large enough for a large service or mass.⁴⁰

Individuals, in addition to coalitions, also advocated for airport chapels in some cities. John Oas came from an evangelical Protestant church in 1974 to the Seattle airport where he remained until his death in 2013. Perhaps seeing the airport as a mission field, he formed Sea-Tac Ministries, a nonprofit corporation focused on helping airport workers and travelers. Describing himself as an industrial chaplain, he was described in a 1992 newspaper article as believing “his task is to bring faith to a segment of the population that, because of their jobs and unusual work schedules, doesn’t fit into a Sunday come-to-meeting” setting. He opened a sparsely furnished chapel that is today called a meditation room.⁴¹ Robert White, the current chaplain at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, also began his work there in the early 1970s through work he was doing with several airport employees at his local congregation. The airlines donated space for his office, he says, that he mostly used for counseling as he worked with staff with chemical dependency and other issues. Largely a one-man effort, he describes his presence as a source of ongoing conflict for the airport which has never had a formal chapel or meditation area.⁴²

Unlike the interfaith chapel spaces in Atlanta, the shared but Protestant-oriented space in Dallas, or the counseling spaces in Minneapolis, the Protestant-Catholic-Jewish model of separate chapel spaces (and chaplaincies) remained at JFK until the mid-1980s when the chaplaincy's lease to the land ended and the chapels were demolished to make way for airport expansion. The expansion plan called for the chapels to be consolidated into a single interfaith space built far from the main terminal building, perhaps because the three congregations had dwindled and there was little contact between the chaplains and traveling public. The Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish chaplains did not like this plan and did not want to be further disconnected from the airport by physical distance so agreed to share a small interim interfaith chapel in the international arrivals hall of the airport. This shared chapel was decorated with some items from the original chapels and remained in use until the early 2000s when four separate rooms were opened side-by-side in the same location for Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims (though the space is formally called a multifaith chapel). Today the chaplains have a twenty-five-year lease but do not pay for their space in the airport.⁴³

More Recent Approaches, 1990–2010: Religiously Inclusive Frames

The last decade of the twentieth century and early 2000s witnessed the rise of more religiously inclusive chapels both in efforts to create spaces welcoming to all and in distinct areas for Muslim prayer. Such changes reflect growing public awareness of religious diversity, growing public awareness of Islam especially after 9/11, and growing awareness of actual and potential conflicts over religion in public settings.

The airport chapel in Phoenix, started by Chaplain Al Young at Sky Harbor Airport in the late 1980s, is an example of a shifting orientation toward more inclusivity. While Chaplain Young expected people to use the chapel as a place for rest, quiet prayer, and meditation, he soon found himself facing passengers in distress needing food or a hotel for the night. He partnered with traveler's aid to offer these services and through the 1990s expanded the chaplaincy's separate 501(c)(3) organization to be more religiously inclusive. The initial organizers were mostly conservative Christians, and while chaplains did not proselytize, the overt articulation of their personal faith was central to the work. The executive director of the American Jewish Committee in Phoenix and a representative from the Catholic diocese challenged the Protestant emphasis and helped to expand this approach, which led to a broader interfaith perspective and name change to Sky Harbor Interfaith Chaplaincy.

The chapel itself at the Phoenix airport has moved a few times and is currently in terminal four near the currency exchange. A glass door next to a stained glass window marks the space that includes a few chairs, some reading materials, sacred texts from a range of religious traditions, rugs for Muslim prayer, and some artwork. A framed poster that says “The Golden Rule” and has photos and words from a range of religious traditions sits over a table some people might see as an altar. “We have a recirculating water fountain for trickling water sounds and an oil lamp,” Chaplain Young explained. “These are symbols that are common to almost all religious traditions, so we have placed these there for people to connect with as it might strike their own awareness of their faith.” He and his colleagues tried to create a space for people from a range of religious backgrounds in this remodel of the chapel in 2005. He estimates that five hundred people per month use the chapel.⁴⁴

A similar impulse toward religious inclusivity led to a very different kind of chapel space called a meditation room—after airport lawyers got involved—at the San Francisco International Airport in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Mikki Bourne, a Reform Jewish rabbi, led efforts to create an interfaith chapel in San Francisco when the new international building was constructed in the 1990s.⁴⁵ She and airport officials designed what she described as an “interfaith chapel that would be more of a collage, a mosaic, rather than a secular interfaith chapel.”⁴⁶ While some chapels end up excluding religious symbols in favor of more neutral images of nature and light, in other words, Bourne and her colleagues initially imagined a space that would include multiple religious symbols. The city agreed to pay for the space, but Bourne explained, “I guess you have to have attorneys look at this since it’s church and state and so everything got watered down.”⁴⁷

Some of these revisions resulted from court cases questioning the constitutionality of airport chapels that had increasingly made the news.⁴⁸ In a 1994 case, three Cleveland residents argued that the chapel run by the Catholic archdiocese at Cleveland’s Hopkins International Airport made it difficult for them to use the airport. The United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against them arguing that public money was not used to support the space, the airport administration played only a minimal role in it, and no one had been denied access to the chapel itself.⁴⁹

The space at San Francisco International Airport, called the Berman Reflection Room after Jewish philanthropist Henry Berman, a former president of the San Francisco Airport Commission, looks mostly like a quiet waiting room filled with plants and lines of connected chairs common in other airport waiting areas. Guidelines state

that the room is to “provide an area for the passengers and employees of San Francisco International Airport to conduct quiet reflective and meditative activities.”⁵⁰ A small, enclosed space is available for services that contain no religious symbols or obvious connections to things religious or spiritual. While Bourne and her colleagues wanted the space to be religiously pluralistic and inclusive of religious symbols and images from a broad range of religious and spiritual traditions, the attorneys—perhaps out of fear of conflict—created a secular space that has no trappings of being a meditation or reflection room except for the signs indicating as much on the door. Their impetus—to include all—is much like Al Young’s in Phoenix, but their process of doing so led to a very different physical space.

The religious group seen as most unable to use these shared spaces in the 1990s but in need of a space to pray while traveling were Muslims. A number of airports in the 1990s and 2000s added places to allow Muslim staff and travelers to pray, which was important as Muslims and their families were increasingly dispersed geographically across the country. An interfaith group rebuilt the chapel at the Denver International Airport in the 1990s and added an adjacent Islamic prayer room that leaders claimed was the first airport masjid outside the Islamic world.⁵¹ The Detroit Metropolitan Airport also created a “Religious Reflection Room” in the mid-2000s. This is interesting given that Detroit was home to large numbers of Muslims before 2000. My efforts to get additional information about this space were not successful though a public relations representative for the airport told me, “We decided not to give it [the room] a religious designation because we are a public institution and there are so many different religions and branches of religion. It is a reflection center—if you want to go in, you go in.”⁵² While the airport may be trying to ward off controversy by calling this space a “reflection room,” its appearance suggests that it is mostly used for Muslim prayer. When a colleague visited and photographed the space, it had a few chairs around the perimeter, the cardinal directions on the rug and walls, and individual prayer rugs scattered throughout.

Security concerns also informed decisions about chapel construction and renovation, particularly post 9/11. With expanded security check-points, chapels in some airports were relocated, and the ease by which passengers and staff could visit others were challenged. George Szalony, a chaplain at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, explained that the main space where the chaplains could sit and talk with people at the airport was lost after 9/11 as the Transportation Security Administration expanded. A small space for a chapel was eventually procured in another area of the airport.⁵³

III. Negotiating Multifaith Spaces in Airports Today

The Design of Physical Spaces: A Continuum

Of the twenty largest American airports today, sixteen have permanent chapel spaces that reveal a range of approaches to contemporary American religion and spirituality.⁵⁴ Airports in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia and New York's La Guardia do not have chapel spaces though representatives in Philadelphia seriously considered opening such a space just after 9/11 as a way of caring for the traveling public.⁵⁵ A Catholic chaplain at LaGuardia holds mass in a conference room and hopes to have a permanent space in the future. The number of chapels in individual airports varies with Dallas having five; JFK four; Atlanta three; Detroit, Denver and Houston two; and the remaining airports one. These spaces are today mostly called "Interfaith Chapel" or "City Name Airport Chapel" though a few are called meditation or reflection rooms and the Catholic chapels at JFK, Boston's Logan and Chicago's O'Hare maintain their formal "Our Lady" names. Most spaces are designated on airport maps by a symbol of a person bent in prayer.⁵⁶ About half of the chapels are on the pre-security side of the airport and the other half accessible only after passengers pass through security, reflecting changes post 9/11 that make access to these spaces more challenging.

The physical appearance of chapels today varies as the history to date suggests. At one end of a continuum are the Catholic chapels that remain in Boston, New York's JFK, and Chicago's O'Hare where the historically Catholic roots of airport chaplaincy remain strong. These airports each have a large Catholic-oriented chapel that seats many people for mass and is staffed by a chaplain-priest, appointed and paid by the local diocese. While little has changed in Boston and JFK, the chaplaincy at O'Hare transitioned informally in the 1980s and more formally in the early 1990s from control by the Catholic church to being formally run by the multifaith O'Hare Interfaith Chapel Corporation.⁵⁷ Services from a range of religious traditions take place in that chapel and a sign on the door explains, "The chapel is open to all for quiet meditation, reflection, prayer and scheduled worship services." Several journalists have called the single-faith Catholic airport chapels a "dying breed."⁵⁸

At the other end of a continuum are airports that have removed, or never had, symbols from specific religious traditions in their chapels and typically call them meditation rooms, quiet seating areas, or reflection rooms.⁵⁹ The chapels in the Atlanta airport aim to be such spaces. Most are small rooms with a few chairs and clear glass

entrances. There are no religious objects except for sacred texts from a range of religious traditions. Chaplain Chester Cook explained:

This is your chapel. It is a public chapel. It belongs to the citizens of Atlanta. So you can do what you want in this chapel. If you want to sit and read or be quiet, that's fine. You don't have to practice your religion here . . . I try to compare it to the other amenities that the airport offers. We offer a dog park for dogs to come and relieve themselves and the government pays for that . . . the city provides landscaping, trees, flowers, art, music. All of these things are amenities or customer services to help the passenger have a more enjoyable experience. The chapel is another one of those amenities.⁶⁰

Chester Cook raises the funds for his salary from a range of sources in the greater Atlanta area. Whether chapels and chaplaincies pay rent for their space varies across airports.

In between these two poles are chapels that include religious symbols and objects from a range of religious traditions. The "Chapel (Meditation Room)" at the Charlotte Douglas Airport is one such space. Located above a Cinnabon, the chapel is a small rectangular space entered through a door with a small stained glass window and image of a person kneeling in prayer. Multiple religious texts are inside alongside prayer rugs, rosary beads, and artistically rendered quotes from the world's major religions. Pamphlets on topics ranging from grief to forgiveness are available for visitors to take with them and signs about services and ways to locate chaplains or volunteers figure prominently. In Charlotte, the airport management was clear that they would only lease chapel space to a nonprofit nondenominational group. This requirement led what had begun as an unofficial relationship between the airport and Catholic Diocese of Charlotte to expand to include people from a range of other traditions and the chapel that resulted to have a more multifaith approach.⁶¹

The development of the chapel / meditation room in Charlotte stands in marked contrast to how space for chapels was procured in Boston or New York's JFK and begins to explain why there is more variation among airport chapels than sociologists interested in organizational fields might suspect. Sociologists Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell explain in their classic article, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality," that organizations in given fields come to resemble one another through processes of isomorphism. In some cases, organizational forms converge as they respond to common government or legal regulations through processes of coercive isomorphism.⁶² The chapel in Charlotte reveals a version of

coercive isomorphism at work as the chapel was constructed in a certain way because the airport insisted on working with a non-profit non-denominational group. Similar pressures, however, were not present in Boston where the airport rented the land to the Catholic Church for a chapel or in Atlanta where the airport did not stipulate who it would work with and, therefore, how the resulting chapel might appear. Coercive isomorphism, in other words, leads organizations—in this case chapels and chaplaincies—to resemble one another only if the government and legal pressures are common or consistent, which they distinctly are not across airports around chapel construction.

Negotiating Inclusion in Mission and Formal Guidelines

As Sophie Gilliat-Ray found in the British context, many airport chapels in the United States struggle with issues of religious inclusion in their current multifaith contexts.⁶³ While some, like the chapel at Boston's Logan airport, signal inclusion by adding spaces for non-Christians to pray, others struggle with these questions in their mission statements and in the rules for using chapel spaces, often posted prominently on chapel doors. In their mission statements today, many chaplaincies emphasize the moral and spiritual support they provide to employees and travelers alike. Words like caring, compassion, presence, and community are common in mission statements that also emphasize that chaplains serve all people—rather than mostly Catholics as in the early days—and chapel spaces are open to all.

The legal mission statement of the chaplaincy at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, for example, says that they provide, “pastoral support and services to users and employees of Charlotte Douglas International Airport without regard to religious, socio-economic, racial and ethnic background, or veteran status.”⁶⁴ Chaplains and volunteers must agree not to proselytize and to just meet the person whoever they are in their work. Similarly, the mission of the Dallas Fort Worth Airport Interfaith Chaplaincy is “to be a ministry of presence, spiritual counseling and personal support to the DFW International Airport community at large providing places of worship and reflection for people of all faiths and religious traditions.” The language of mission stands in contrast to the early Catholic airport chapels whose mission did not need to be stated; it was assumed by the leaders and presumably also airport administration who rarely voiced objections or concerns.

The language of presence in these statements is one way of responding to religious diversity—by trying to emphasize things that different religious traditions have in common—and is shared among

chaplains in airports as well as in healthcare and other sectors as is the emphasis on chapel spaces being open to all, even when they are not outfitted to be used by people from a range of religious traditions.⁶⁵ Inclusion, in other words, and openness to all is an articulated value in many airport chapels today as are attempts to create single physical spaces that people from a range of backgrounds might find welcoming. This sort of frame was not common in earlier years when there was less religious diversity in the United States and certainly less public conversation about ways of addressing those differences, religious and otherwise.

Signs on and around chapel doors in airports further current messages of inclusion while trying to protect the unique or sacred purpose of the space. Typical signs ask visitors not to eat, drink, sleep, loiter, or use cell phones in the chapel as well as to maintain a quiet or prayerful atmosphere. A sign on the Interfaith Chapel outside of security in the Atlanta airport, for example, welcomes visitors while asking for their assistance in “maintaining our Chapel and its prayer atmosphere by refraining from eating, drinking, sleeping, loitering, moving furniture and loud conversation.” References to “prayer” and “quiet” are most common across airports raising questions about what is required for a sacred space to be seen as sacred today. While worship in some religious traditions is loud, boisterous, and infused with music, a more quiet – perhaps historically Protestant – individualistic approach to prayer and meditation may be being imagined in these spaces.

In a few airports, signs gesture as much toward inclusion as to real – or imagined – tensions between church and state.⁶⁶ A “Policy Use and Disclaimer” sign hangs in a glass case outside the chapel at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport. “By providing this space for public use,” the sign explains, “the city of Chicago does not endorse any of the views expressed in the chapels by individuals or religious groups during worship services.” It further states, “The chapel is open for the chaplaincy and worship services of any denomination that enters into the corporation’s [O’Hare Interfaith Chapel Corporation] standard agreement.” These guidelines simultaneously situate the space as open to all (i.e., not endorsing views) and regulate who can actually use the space (i.e., members of the chapel corporation, not random religious groups passing through the airport). While a small sign in the Berman Reflection Room in San Francisco provides basic rules about not eating or sleeping, the complete guidelines occupy a full page in the airport’s handbook and include requirements to obtain permits for group gatherings and / or the use of certain substances like incense. If guidelines like these were common across airport chapels, sociologists might expect them to lead the chapels gradually to become more like one

another through processes of coercive isomorphism, as described above, or mimetic isomorphism, the process by which organizations actually model themselves after one another in response to uncertainties in their environments. In fact, these guidelines are different at various airports, if they exist at all, which helps to explain why airport chapels remain so organizationally diverse as religious pluralism gets worked out on the ground in different ways in different cities.

While most of these signs are oriented toward religious inclusion, some raise broader questions of inclusion by pointing toward questions of who is actually using these spaces and for what purposes. At the Religious Reflection Room at the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, for example, a sign reads, "This is a religious reflection room not a break room. Employees using this facility as a break room are subject to confiscation of badge." My observations and journalistic accounts suggest that most of these spaces today are used for private prayer, meditation, reading, and sleeping—despite signs explicitly forbidding sleeping—by staff and travelers alike.⁶⁷ About two-thirds hold regular religious services, most of which seem to draw only a few people. Some, notably those in Denver, Newark, and Dallas, allow (and in some cases encourage) weddings (perhaps for financial reasons?) while others explicitly do not.⁶⁸ Only one, as far as I could find—the Berman Reflection Room in San Francisco—has been used as a staging area and place to comfort survivors and relatives following an air disaster.

Negotiating Inclusion in Action

Like the physical spaces, the daily work of airport chaplains is guided by carefully negotiated informal rules and norms. While chaplains are not airport employees—most are employees of the Catholic church or nonprofit chaplaincy organizations at their local airports—their ability to do their work is premised on following and continuing to negotiate guidelines that vary across airports. In Atlanta, for example, chaplain Chester Cook explains that chaplains are "not supposed to put any kind of religious signage out" in the airport. They follow this rule though do put signs out just before chapel services on Sundays at 11:00am. Individual chaplains are not allowed to pass out literature and are barred from soliciting. Additionally, according to Cook, "if religious groups congregate in certain areas and then start having little services out in public areas, sometimes the DOA [Department of Aviation] will come and shut them down and tell them you can't dance out here in the atrium, and they will send them to the chapel."⁶⁹ This is an interesting contrast to Chicago's O'Hare airport where at

least according to the formal rules an impromptu religious gathering could not be accommodated, including in the chapel, unless that group entered into the O'Hare Interfaith Chapel Corporation's standard agreement.

Chaplains are acutely aware of the actual – or potential – for conflict around religion in airports as public facilities. Many were explicit in interviews about trying to keep at arm's distance anything that might lead to such controversy so as not to get into any trouble with church and state. Such conflicts do arise, however, in inconsistent ways in different airports. In Denver in 2000, for example, overhead announcements letting people know that Catholic mass was about to begin were stopped following complaints and the orders of airport attorneys. The airport now posts signs about the chapel hours and instructs visitors/staff to pick up paging phones to hear service times.⁷⁰

At the Charlotte Douglas airport, chaplains are allowed to make announcements about services only on Sundays and only just before the service. They also sometimes run into other conflicts like when George Szalony, a chaplain, had a complaint filed against him for distributing ashes in the terminal on Ash Wednesday. "Most airports are city or county property," he explained. "We're owned by them, and as such we're governed by whatever the ordinances are for religious groups or organizations." Reflecting on the Ash Wednesday incident, he said he was "immediately ordered to cease and desist" providing ashes "because that was considered a form of solicitation which put me in a violation of a city ordinance." If he wants to distribute ashes next year on Ash Wednesday he will need to get a permit, which he said he might do though "you have to pick and choose your battles."⁷¹ Different actions – announcements of services, offering ashes on Ash Wednesday, etc. – seem to spark different conflicts in different airports depending on current dynamics which, again, points to the intensely local character of these religious spaces.

As a result of conflicts in their own airports and/or those they have heard about from colleagues across the country, airport chaplains remain thoughtful about how they interact with the city officials who oversee their airports. As one chaplain explains, "Any time you are a public institution, you're going to have people that are detractors to what you are doing... We have people that have complained along the way about their being any kind of religion in a public building." His response is to try to get as close to actual complaints as possible. "If they [the airport officials] will give me that person's name [who complained], then let me find out what the reason is behind what you're saying. Did something happen? Did someone treat you poorly?... See first, understand, then be understood." This chaplain

strategically put airport vendors and employees on the board of directors of the airport chaplaincy's 501(c)(3) nonprofit rather than local religious leaders as a way to smooth relations between the chaplaincy and the airport. At another airport, the chaplaincy director includes more local religious leaders on the board and aims to be as broad and inclusive as possible in the religious traditions represented as a way to mitigate potential conflicts. He explains, "I just say, atheists are included, too. You can be part of our Board of Directors. You can come in here and practice your atheist viewpoint alongside the Buddhist and alongside the Jewish person . . . You're welcome here, too."

Chaplains utilize a number of strategies to develop collegial relationships with the airport officials that are essential both to maintaining their physical chapel space and to enabling staff and volunteers to do their work. While some include airport vendors and employees on their board and / or aim to include a wide range of local religious people in their efforts, others carefully follow rules about when and how they can share information about their services and, as one chaplain explains, they "pick their battles" when actual conflicts arise. The possibility of conflict hovers over these chaplains regularly, mostly because the local, state, and federal guidelines that shape their work vary and are open to interpretation and re-interpretation in the courts and as public opinion shifts. While normative pressures from common formal education, professional networks, and other shared struggles could lead airport chapels to respond to these issues in similar ways – and in the process potentially converge in form – the struggles which are intensely local and varied seem not to lead to much organizational convergence. Most of the strategies chaplains utilize are designed to fend off conflict before it arrives by having people in place that facilitate good relationships and, in some cases, trying to keep a relatively low profile.⁷²

In only one interview did a chaplain begin to think strategically about how the kinds of interactions that might happen in an airport chapel could model broader approaches to interreligious understanding and conflict. "Several years ago," this chaplain remembered,

I walked into the chapel one day . . . there was a Muslim on their prayer rug . . . there was a guy kneeling probably fifteen feet from him at an altar and he had a Bible open in front of him. And there was a Buddhist monk that was sitting over on the side almost in a lotus position doing his meditation and prayer. And they were all in the same room at the same time . . . I wish I could take a picture of this and put it on a paper somewhere where people would realize we don't have to hurt each other.

That only one chaplain thought about how chapel spaces might facilitate interreligious understanding points, again, to the defensive posture many take as they seek to avoid religious-related conflict.

IV. Conclusion

Airport chapels in the United States were started by Catholics—leaders and lay people—in the 1950s and have expanded to include founders and leaders from a range of religious traditions. Initially designed to create physical space for Catholic travelers and staff working 24-hour shifts in the airport to pray, as changes during Vatican II led the Catholic church to make worship more accessible, these spaces today vary significantly across airports illustrating the many ways religious pluralism is worked out on the ground in different local contexts. Charting this history reveals an overall shift from Catholic-centered spaces in the 1950s and 1960s to more Protestant and multifaith spaces in the 1970s and 1980s to more religiously inclusive spaces in the 1990s and 2000s. Today, the spaces vary from a few that remain Catholic centered to those that try to negotiate multifaith demographics quite explicitly to those that include few to no religious symbols, perhaps aiming to create more broadly spiritual spaces.

Sixteen of the twenty largest U.S. airports have some kind of chapel or meditation space today. The reasons for these spaces and their variations are idiosyncratic and intensely local. Their stories reveal much about the complicated often legally uncertain place of religion in airports (and other public institutions) and how religious pluralism gets negotiated on the ground. While sociologists informed by field theory would expect airport chapels gradually to come to resemble one another organizationally, that has not happened to date. No two airports have negotiated religion and spirituality in the same way, and what is permissible in one city is often not in another. The traditional ways that this organizational convergence takes place—through processes of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism—have largely not taken place because the intensely local nature of these spaces leads them not to be subject to common governmental and legal regulations, organizational mimicking, or pressures brought from leaders trained in standard, predictable ways. Each chapel, in other words, reflects local religious realities and negotiations as informed by changing national religious demographics over time more than it reflects a standard set of changes in airport chapels as a group as influenced by their relationships with one another.

This variation is particularly evident today when considering how different airport chapels have responded to questions about religious diversity and potential conflicts around church and state. The chapel in Detroit—largely a Muslim prayer room in practice—is called a religious reflection room in an effort to appeal to all. The Berman Reflection Room in San Francisco was imagined as a space that would house religious symbols from a range of religious traditions, yet they were removed before construction by airport attorneys. The chapel in Charlotte explicitly includes symbols from a range of religious traditions, but the chaplain has been cited for distributing ashes on Ash Wednesday. In all of these cases, leaders have improvised their spaces and actions in response to local pressures and dynamics. Their improvised nature speaks to the continued intense local nature of religion and spirituality—even in airports—literal linkages to broader transnational relations. It also points to airports as distinct from prisons and military contexts where the spaces allocated for religious purposes are defined by policy and subject to greater scrutiny than in airports.

Reflecting on the ongoing support he has received from his archdiocese, one Catholic priest chaplain told me, “When I was more actively involved in the international association [of airport chaplains], we’d get together and I’d hear these stories of what chaplaincies go through trying to get established and all the diversity of arrangements—who is paying for the space, etc. I’ve been very, very fortunate in terms of the airport ministry.” He continued, mentioning support from the archdiocese for his salary and the facility. Other chaplains similarly reflected on local controversies pointing to chapels forced by court order to stop holding religious services, announcing services over the intercom, or even using the word chaplain to describe the staff that work there.

For these reasons, almost all of the chaplains my colleagues and I interviewed were aware that their chapel spaces and work more generally are precarious. Shifting tides of public opinion—most often evident in complaints from passengers and staff—changing security regulations that could lead the airport to need the chapel space, and controversies focused on the chapel or chaplains were all viewed as risk factors by these chaplains that could impact their continued access to the airport. Related negotiations, therefore, were continual as chaplains tried to stay on top of possible problems and, in some cases, tried to stay below the radar and not bring unnecessary attention to themselves or chapel spaces.

More broadly, these findings show how religious pluralism gets worked out on the ground, in the practices of actual people and organizations. While this working out is clearly informed by state and

local policies and court cases, many of the decisions in these cases were made anticipating problems rather than responding to actual problems. While First Amendment protections informs decision-making in the United States, other external factors likely influence how chapels have been constructed in non-U.S. airports and in other public settings in the United States and abroad.

As a case, the airport chapels explored here point to several possible insights when sociologists and religious studies scholars look for religion outside of congregations and other expected places. First, the chapels show quite simply that religion is present in other organizations and raise questions—like those addressed here—about how and why and what does this mean. This case suggests that changes during Vatican II were not restricted to the Catholic church but potentially helped to start a series of airport chapels that today are Catholic and reflective of a range of other religious traditions. As a group, these spaces reflect shifts in American religion through the second half of the twentieth century connected to immigration, growing public awareness of religious diversity, growing attention to Islam, the effects of 9/11, and other factors.

Second, these chapels show that the forms religion takes in airports are intensely local – ironic in buildings literally designed to facilitate travel—and raise questions about how these forms compare to religion in other public institutions. There are many more guidelines about religion in the military than in airports, for example, that lead their chapels to look more standard and quite different from those in airports. There are fewer guidelines in healthcare organizations though studies of hospital chapels suggest different patterns than evident here.⁷³ Whether chapels in other public institutions reveal more of the institutional isomorphism scholars of organizations might expect both within and across fields / sectors or remain more varied as tied to local factors are important unanswered questions with implications both for organizational theory and for thinking about contemporary American religion.

Finally, these chapels point to how little is known sociologically about the actual forms religion take in public institutions and the conceptual and methodological assumptions that underlie scholarly approaches to these questions. Despite the wide variety of terms used to refer to these institutions—secular institutions, secular organizations, public institutions, secular public institutions—they share the fact that it is in and through them that people encounter what John Bowen calls “the ‘state’: as a regulator of citizenship, a provider of services, or a source of employment.” Little is known about how airports, healthcare organizations, prisons, universities, and the military

handle and manage religious and spiritual issues and what the similarities and differences across sectors suggests about how the religious and the secular have and are being negotiated and renegotiated in contemporary societies.⁷⁴ There remains much work to do.

Notes

1. More information at http://www.atlanta-airport.com/fifth/atl/atl_factsheet.aspx.

2. For exceptions, see David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

3. Karla Cavarra Britton, *Constructing the Ineffable: Contemporary Sacred Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Bret E. Carroll, "Worlds in Space: American Religious Pluralism in Geographic Perspective," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 2 (2012); David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); N. J. Demerath III. et al., *Sacred Companies: Organizational Aspects of Religion and Religious Aspects of Organizations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Renata Hejduk and Jim Williamson, *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Louis P. Nelson, *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Spaces* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

4. Margaret M. Grubiak, *White Elephants on Campus: The Decline of the University Chapel in America, 1920–1960* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2014); Douglas Jacobsen and Rhona Hustedt Jacobsen, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Victor Kazanjian, "Towards a Multi-Faith Community at Wellesley College," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action*, ed. Patrice Brodeur and Eboo Patel (Landham, Md.: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006); Stephen G. Parker, "Theorising 'Sacred' Space in Educational Contexts: A Case Study of Three English Midlands Sixth Forum Colleges," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 30, (2009); Wendy Cadge, *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Michael C. Wright, "Chaplaincy in Hospice and Hospital: Findings from a Survey in England and Wales," *Palliative Medicine* 15 (2001); James A. Beckford, "Doing Time: Space, Time Religious Diversity and the Sacred in Prisons," *International Review of Sociology* 11, (2001); James Beckford and Sophie Gilliat, *Religion in Prison: Equal Rites in a Multi-Faith*

Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Robert Dannin, "Island in a Sea of Ignorance: Dimensions of the Prison Mosque," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Photos of some of these multifaith spaces are documented at: <http://cargocollective.com/wwwmulti-faith-spacesorg>.

5. Wendy Cadge, Margaret Clendenen, and Laura Olson, "Idiosyncratic Prophets: Personal Style in the Prayers of Congressional Chaplains, 1990–2010," *Journal of Church and State* (2015).

6. Department of the Air Force Chaplain Service. *Air Mobility Command Chapel Facilities Design Guide* (1999); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Army Chapel Standard Definitive Design for the Initial Entry Training Setting* (2010); Naval Facilities Engineering Command. *Chapels & Religious Educational Facilities: Design Requirements and Functional Analyses* (1985).

7. Naval Facilities Engineering Command, *Chapels & Religious Educational Facilities*, 6.c.1-3. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Army Chapel Standard Definitive Design for the Initial Entry Training Setting*. Department of the Air Force Chaplain Service, *Air Mobility Command Chapel Facilities Design Guide*.

8. Sophie Gilliat-Ray, "From 'Chapel' to 'Prayer Room': The Production, Use, and Politics of Sacred Space in Public Institutions," *Culture and Religion* 6 (2005).

9. Ralf Brand, "Case Study 4. Multi-Faith Spaces as Symptoms and Agents of Change," in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*, ed. Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (New York: Routledge, 2012).

10. This article is based on detailed historical research and interviews with chaplains at the twenty largest U.S. airports today. While I focus primarily on these twenty, I also mention others in the history when that information was available in the public domain. I aimed to visit all the chapels in the twenty largest airports. Colleagues visited a few for me and sent photographs. While this paper is social scientific, there is also theological writing about airport chaplaincy including Michael Banfield, "Steps toward Starting an Airport Chaplaincy" (International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains, 2009); "An Approach to Airport Chaplaincy" (IACAC Conference, 2008); Michael Vincer, "Airports," in *Chaplaincy: The Church's Sector Ministries*, ed. Giles Legood (New York: Cassell, 1999); *Airport Chaplaincy: A Catholic Handbook*, (National Conference of Catholic Airport Chaplains, 2011). I focus on the

United States. Analysis of airport chapels outside of the United States includes Marion Bowman, <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/podcast-marion-bowman-on-vernacular-religion/> (2012); C.T. [Peter] Holloway, "My Parish Was an Airport" (1990); Robert B. Tillman, "Vancouver International Airport Ministry."

11. For example, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/premium-1.618630>.

12. Marc Auge, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1995).

13. Douglas A. Hicks, *With God on All Sides: Leadership in a Devout and Diverse America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

14. There is periodic media attention to these spaces, for example, "Faith and the Frequent Flyer," *Macleans* April 1, 2002; Andrea Seabrook, *Talk of the Nation "Airport Chapels: 'Flying on a Wing and a Prayer'"* (<http://www.npr.org/2011/07/04/137607072/airport-chapels-flying-on-a-wing-and-a-prayer>, July 4, 2011); Diana Novak Jones, "Sunday Sitdown: Rev. Mike Zaniolo, O'Hare Airport Chaplain," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 3, 2015; Mike Tierney, "The Airport Chaplain, Now Offering Earthly Aid," *New York Times*, March 2, 2014.

15. "U.S. Airport Accommodates Muslim Prayers," *On Islam & Newspapers*, June 11, 2013; Jillian Lloyd, "Religious Practices v. Work Demands," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 31, 1998; Michael Clancy, "Airport Answers Prayers," *Arizona Republic*, May 20, 2004; Matier and Ross, "Airport's Garage Now a Muslim House of Worship," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 9, 2013; Martha C. White, "Yoga Rooms Offer a Quiet Break in Hectic Airports," *New York Times*, May 4, 2015.

16. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

17. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, ed. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

18. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Paul DiMaggio, "State Expansion and Organizational Fields," in *State Expansion and Organizational Fields*, ed. R. H. Hall and R. E. Quinn (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983); William Sewell, "A Theory

of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, (1992).

19. Sociologists frequently debate what constitutes a field based on how they understand the theoretical criteria in actual settings. I view airport chapels as a field because they are involved in common endeavors distinct from other spaces or organizations. While some chapels are actual organizations connected to chaplaincy at their airport, others are just spaces – a variation I allow within the field because of their common orientation.

20. Issac Weiner, *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

21. "Public Chapel of Our Lady of the Airways. Logan International Airport," *Liturgical Arts* 20 (1952); Chris Reidy, "From Fast Mass to the Masses," *Boston Globe*, December 27, 1992. Archbishop Cushing also built workmen's chapels in the port of Boston and at the train station in the early 1950s. Our Lady of Good Voyages was built on the Boston Fish Pier dedicated on December 8, 1952. "Fish Pier Chapel Will Open Dec. 8," *Daily Boston Globe*, November 17, 1952.

22. Chad Alan Bayowski, "Exploring Interfaith Space: The Chapel(s) at JFK International Airport" (Harvard University, 2005).

23. Interview, Richard Uftring, October 2013. Before the chapel was built, Rev. Joseph D. Hawes, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church, was identified as an airport chaplain in a news article about a young girl stranded at Logan Airport in 1949. "Girl, 7, Unable to Speak English, Stranded for a While at Airport," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 1949. Documents from the archives of the Catholic archdiocese suggest space for an airport chapel was also offered to Protestants and Jews who did not come forward to build one.

24. Rev. Bernard McLaughlin served at Logan from 1972 to 1994 at which point the current chaplain, Father Richard Uftring was assigned. Father McLaughlin was also pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in East Boston and used revenue from the airport chapel to support what in the early 1990s was a largely immigrant poor parish. Reidy, "From Fast Mass to the Masses." Priests assigned to the airport also often cover the seaport in Boston.

25. See <http://www.jfkchapel.org/index.php/chapel/chapel-history/71-history-of-our-lady-of-the-skies-chapel>.

26. Bayowski, "Exploring Interfaith Space."

27. Ibid.

28. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955).

29. Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: The Chapels at Kennedy Airport," *New York Times*, June 21, 1987; Bayowski, "Exploring Interfaith Space."

30. Ari L. Goldman, "Faiths at Odds over Razing Airport Chapels," *New York Times*, August 25, 1985; "Follow-up on the News: Airport Chapels to Be Retained," *New York Times* August 10, 1986.

31. Interview, Michael Zaniolo, July 2013.

32. Interview, David Baratelli, September 2013.

33. Their webpage currently describes them as a "global professional association that brings together airport chaplains of all faiths and religions from all over the world." <http://www.iacac.info/index.php/iacac/about-iacac/72-history-of-iacacafter>.

34. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/index.htm.

35. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/s_index_civilaviation/rc_pc_migrants_sectioncivilaviation.htm.

36. See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20000601_avci_presentazione_en.html; *Airport Chaplaincy: A Catholic Handbook*, 2011.

37. Orlando was an exception where a small Catholic chapel was opened in 1983 and named after a crane operator, Michael Galvin, who was killed working on an airport expansion project. The current chaplain, Robert Susann, explained that Galvin was honored in this way because "he saved a lot of lives because of the way he operated the crane when it fell" (interview, August 2013). The chapel was on the unsecure side of the airport when it was built but is now on the secure side as security rules have changed. The first chaplain started work at the airport in 2005.

38. Interview, Chester Cook, August 2013.

39. See <http://www.archatl.com/about/airportchaplain/history.html>.

40. See <http://www.dfairportchapel.org/history.html>.

41. Aweeka, December 31, 1992. He worked at the airport as well as with police, firefighters, first responders, and others until his death in 2013. A description of his ministry is here: <http://chaplaincy.org/>.

42. Interview, Robert White, August 2013.

43. Bayowski. "Exploring Interfaith Space"; Interview, Chris Piasta, September 2013.

44. Interview, Al Young, July 2013.

45. Prior to this time there was no designated spiritual or religious space in the airport aside from the Christian Science Reading Room, which was opened privately in 1955 (<http://csreadingroom-sfo.org/history/>).

46. Interview, Mikki Bourne, August 2013.

47. Ibid. See also Matthai Kuruvila, "SFO's Reflection Room Used Mostly for Snoozing," *SF Gate*, January 4, 2009.

48. There was at least one court case prior to 1990s, *Brashich v. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey* (1979), in which the United States District Court of the Southern District of New York heard a challenge against the three chapels at JFK airport under both the First and Fourth Amendments. Injunctive relief was denied (http://www.leagle.com/decision/19791181484FSupp697_11072). General issues related to airport solicitation were also present in cases involving the Hare Krishnas in New York in 1992 and Los Angeles in 2010. In 1992 the Supreme Court heard *International Society for Krishna Consciousness v. Lee* in which the Court ruled that banning solicitation by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is reasonable because solicitors may slow the path of customers, cause duress, or commit fraud. The ban was initially instituted by New York City's Airport Authority. The Hare Krishnas argued that it was against their First Amendment rights to deny their not-for-profit group to engage in fundraising (<http://www.lexisnexis.com/lvacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VJ2-JX80-002K-7001&csi=6443&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>). In the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness of California v. City of Los Angeles* (2010), the Hare Krishnas challenged the ban in Los Angeles and lost again. This decision made it to the California Supreme Court (<http://www.lexisnexis.com/lvacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=4SPT-JJ10-TXFX-D39M&csi=6320&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>).

49. See http://www.leagle.com/decision/199483824F3d814_1722.xml/HAWLEY%20v.%20CITY%20OF%20CLEVELAND.

50. Airport Commision City and County of San Francisco, "Rules and Regulations, San Francisco International Airport" (November 2009).

51. Cathy Lynn Grossman, "On the Wing? There's Room for a Prayer," *USA Today* January 26, 1999; Glen Martin, "A Place to Pray," and Virginia Culver, "Interfaith Chapel at Dia Opens with High Spirits at Dedication," *Denver Post*, January 11, 1996. The plaque installed on January 10, 1996, for the dedication reads, "My House Shall Be a House of Prayers for All Peoples." Isaiah 56:7. The DIA Interfaith Chapel Committee included Rabbi Steven E. Kaye, President; Mohammed A. Jodeh, Secretary; Rev. Lucia Guzman; Deacon Mark F. Salvato, Vice President; Sister Peggy Maloney, RSA; Henry DeNicola, AIA, Architect. On a second plaque the "Committee gratefully acknowledges and appreciates the cooperation of Colorado Council of Churches, Colorado Muslim Society, Archdiocese of Denver, Rocky Mountain Rabbinical Council, Mayor Wellington E. Webb, James C. DeLong Director of Aviation, The Department of Aviation, The Airlines at DIA for assisting us in building this House of Prayer."

52. Personal communication, public relations staff member, September 2013.

53. Interview, George Szalony, July 2013.

54. Size is based on the number of passengers as reported by the Federal Aviation Administration's annual ranking of enplanements at primary airports, available through their website (FAA.gov). The ranking of passenger boarding comes from data collected through the FAA's database Air Carrier Activity Information System (ACAIS) in 2011, the most recent data available when this research began. We compared the 2010 and 2011 ranks, and, with some slight variation in order, all twenty airports consecutively ranked highest in annual enplanements. By measuring the busiest airports through enplanements, rather than number of flights or weight of cargo transported, we aimed to know how many travelers pass through our domestic airports each year and could potentially use chapel spaces. Airports included were Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International, Chicago O'Hare International, Los Angeles International, Dallas/Fort Worth International, Denver International, John F. Kennedy International, San Francisco International, McCarran International (Las Vegas), Phoenix Harbor International, George Bush Intercontinental (Houston), Charlotte Douglas International, Miami International, Orlando International, Newark Liberty International, Seattle-Tacoma International, Minneapolis-St.

Paul International, Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County, Philadelphia International, Boston Logan International Airport, LaGuardia Airport (New York). Our findings differ somewhat from those reported by the Pew Forum: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/06/most-of-the-busiest-u-s-airports-have-dedicated-chapels/?utm_source=Pew+Research+Center&utm_campaign=ecb8897c3b-Religion_Weekly_July_9_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e953b9b70-ecb8897c3b-399963465.

55. David O'Reilly, "Airport Speeds up Plans for Chapel," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 21, 2001. The lack of a chapel at the Los Angeles International Airport is probably related to legal disputes around Jews for Jesus in the 1980s that focused on the airport there. Robert M. Hardaway et al., *Airport Regulation, Law, and Public Policy* (New York: Quorum Books, 1991); Jeffrey Toobin, *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

56. This kneeling figure was copyrighted in Atlanta, the documents are available through the airport's chaplaincy office. Interview, Chester Cook, August 2013.

57. Interview, Michael Zaniolo, July 2013.

58. Janet Filmore and Jonathan D. Rubin, "Single-Faith Chapels a Dying Breed at U.S. Airports," *Christian Index*, June 19, 2008; Dionne Walker, "Airport Chapels Adapt to Accommodate More Religions," *USA Today*, August 3, 2009.

59. See also "Airport Chapels: Shifting from Denominational to Interfaith."

60. Interview, Chester Cook, August 2013.

61. Interview, George Szalony, July 2013

62. DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

63. Gilliat-Ray, "From 'Chapel' to 'Prayer Room.'"

64. "Legal Mission Statement," n.d., copy in possession of author.

65. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Cadge, *Paging God*.

66. For more on legal regulation see Hardaway et al., *Airport Regulation, Law, and Public Policy*.

67. Kuruvila, "SFO's Reflection Room Used Mostly fro Snoozing."

68. The website of the chaplaincy at the Dallas airport welcomes inquiries about weddings (<http://www.dfwairportchapel.org/services.html>).

69. Interview, Chester Cook, August 2013.

70. Virginia Culver, "Dia Ends Mass Reminders: Church-State Issues Cloud Announcements," *Denver Post*, August 17, 2000.

71. Interview, George Szalony, July 2013. At another airport there has been conflict about whether chaplains can be called chaplains with airport officials arguing on church-state grounds that they cannot use that title.

72. See also Wendy Cadge, "God on the Fly? The Professional Mandates of Airport Chaplains," *Sociology of Religion* (forthcoming).

73. Cadge, *Paging God*.

74. James Beckford, "SSSR Presidential Address Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 (2012); Courtney Bender and Omar M. McRoberts, "Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality" (Social Science Research Council, 2012); Wendy Cadge and Mary Ellen Konieczny, "Hidden in Plain Sight': The Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Secular Organizations," *Sociology of Religion* 75, (2014); Mar Griera and Anna Clot-Garrell, "Banal Is Not Trivial: Visibility, Recognition, and Inequalities between Religious Groups in Prison," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30, (2015).

ABSTRACT Religion and spirituality are present in many organizations in the contemporary United States. While religious studies scholars have traditionally focused on local congregations, some are branching out to explore religion in a broader range of public institutions. Between 1950, when many scholars conceptualized American religion in terms of Will Herberg's classic Protestant-Catholic-Jew and the present, chapels in public institutions including the military, healthcare centers, universities, prisons and airports have expanded and diversified. I focus on airports tracing the evolution of airport chapels from Catholic centered to more multi-faith to more religiously inclusive as unlikely, or perhaps just hidden, analytic mirrors for demographic and cultural changes in American religion. Theoretically, these chapels are case studies that show how the function and appropriate place for religion in public institutions has been

improvised and negotiated locally. The clergy, airport personnel and airport chaplains who make decisions about these spaces lack consistent education about the topic and receive inconsistent guidance from laws and policies across city, state, and federal contexts. The chapel spaces that result are, therefore, much more varied than one might expect and shaped as much by fears about what could cause conflict as by responses to actual conflicts.

Keywords: airport, chapel, public institution, multi-faith, church-state