



The 38th annual meeting of the
Association of Christians Teaching Sociology (ACTS)

June 4 - 7, 2015 Eastern University

Call for papers

2015 Conference Theme:

“In the Image: Negotiating Self in the Contemporary World”

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2: 3-4)

In his 2009 book *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*, social psychologist Kenneth Gergen employs the term *bounded being* to capture the dominant view of the self in Western society—a view of the self as distinct, separate, private, autonomous, and contained. This bounded view of the self as “inner” has a number of pathological consequences, chief among them being the drive to separate and distinguish oneself from others. Rather than finding the essence of ourselves *with* others in a *confluence* of relationships, we frequently indulge identities of separation, seeking to dominate, manage, compete with, and control others. As a consequence we increasingly live in a world of relentless evaluation—a graceless world based on performance and individuation. Gergen asks us to consider the social implications of the bounded being view of the self: “My attempt is to generate an account of human action that can replace the presumption of bounded selves with a vision of relationship. I do not mean relationships between otherwise separate selves, but rather, a process of coordination that precedes the very concept of the self. My hope is to demonstrate that virtually all intelligible action is born, sustained, and/or extinguished within the ongoing process of relationship”(xv). In other words, for Gergen, the relationship precedes the self and bounded being tends to nullify the relational dialectic which sustains our lives and makes them intelligible and meaningful. Gergen’s concerns and hopes, though not explicitly framed in religious terms, resonate with concerns shared by Christians about the self as idol, the biblical injunction to pour ourselves out for others, and the ongoing command to love others as we love ourselves.

The Association of Christians Teaching Sociology (ACTS) invites papers that explore the contemporary self and its implications for community and society. Topics on this theme would include anthropological and sociological understandings of the self, the self and technologies of communication, the gendered self, the institutionalized self (family, marriage, religious life, politics), the material self, and other matters, both theoretical and empirical, that bring sociological insight to bear on the self and on our responsibilities as image-bearers living in the world to which God has called us. While papers addressing any and all topics are welcome, we invite papers that address the program theme. Abstracts of papers and presentations should be submitted to: David Carlson, Program Chair at david.carlson48@yahoo.com
