

# Perspectives from the Edge: Chaplains in Greater Boston, 1945–2015

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*We follow Bender et al.'s (Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Recentering the Sociology of Religion) call to study religion "on the edge" by looking at the work of chaplains, religious professionals who work outside of congregations. Rather than studying chaplains within a single type of institution—the military, healthcare, or other sectors—we shift the unit of analysis to geography, asking where chaplains in Greater Boston worked between 1945 and the present. Based on coverage in the Boston Globe, we find that chaplains, mostly men, worked across Greater Boston between 1945 and 2015. The majority were Catholic with frequent minorities of Protestants and Jews, and—after 1995—a few Buddhists, Muslims, and Humanists. Most worked in higher education, healthcare, and prisons. While much of the chaplains' work seems improvisational and varied, we identify services related to ceremonies, bearing witness, and working around death as common occurrences across the venues where chaplains worked. To the extent that these patterns are evident in other cities, they suggest that chaplains have regularly been a quiet part of the religious landscape, that they are a consistent part of the institutional field, and that their work has more commonalities across sectors than previous studies suggest.*

**Keywords:** chaplain, religious ecology, institutions, clergy.

## INTRODUCTION

Before joining the army as a chaplain in the 1940s, Fr. John Dugan worked as a chaplain at Boston City Hospital. He celebrated mass at the hospital, visited Catholic patients, and helped non-Catholic patients connect with religious leaders of their own. During World War II, he served abroad and was captured by the Japanese. His memoir, published in sections in the *Boston Globe* in 1945, detailed his experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war in the Philippines (April 3, 1945, April 19, 1945, April 20, 1945). After the war, Dugan returned to Boston to serve as a chaplain at Cushing General Hospital in Framingham where he invited local residents to worship in the hospital chapel (December 25, 1945). He also worked with veterans across the state as the Massachusetts chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; he also spoke at and presided over a broad range of ceremonies.

Dugan's work as a chaplain in Boston in the 1940s was quite different from that of Rev. LeSette Wright in 2015. Wright, an African-American woman, completed a Master of Divinity degree and was ordained to ministry in the American Baptist Churches. She also felt a call to

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chaplaincy and, after completing a short training program through the International Fellowship of Chaplains, was one of seven people recognized as a chaplain by a new group called the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative in a ceremony at Tremont Baptist Church (June 22, 2015). Rather than doing chaplaincy work through hospitals or veterans' organizations such as Dugan, Wright sees herself as a community chaplain, someone who works outside of religious organizations to provide spiritual, religious, and existential support across the city. Committed to anti-violence work, Wright helped connect chaplains and people in need after the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 and regularly provides support to victims of violence and their families in the city.

Dugan and Wright are two of hundreds of people who worked or still work as chaplains in the Greater Boston area between 1945 and 2015. Some were clergy in local congregations who did chaplaincy work in addition to their formal assignments; others were officially employed as chaplains in hospitals, prisons, and the military. Still others worked as volunteers in a range of settings. While the history of Boston's religious institutions has been written many times over, less is known about chaplains in Boston or other cities across the country (Eck 2001; Johnson 2015; McRoberts 1999; O'Connor 1998; Sarna and Smith 1995). Often viewed by scholars and religious professionals as "second class," or marginal, because their work takes place outside of traditional parishes and congregations, the work of chaplains offers a rarely considered lens through which to view the fullness of American religious life and practice (Bender et al. 2013; Sullivan 2014; VandeCreek 1999).

We come to this project curious about indicators that suggest the presence and/or role of chaplains in a range of sectors across the country may be changing. The number of people enrolling in Christian graduate theological schools in the United States and Canada has been declining steadily since the early 2000s (Wheeler, Ruger, and Miller 2013). However, growing numbers of those schools—as many as a third of them—have started programs in the past 20 years that focus on training chaplains (Cadge and Stroud 2017). More people coming to theological schools show interest in chaplaincy and other nontraditional forms of ministry as a profession as the number of people who belong to congregations decreases and the American religious landscape continues to shift (author cite). The number of already trained clergy working outside of congregations is also rising, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (author cite). One vivid example is the sector where there has been the largest increase in the number of people working who identify as clergy between 1970 and the present: healthcare. Furthermore, growing numbers of people (especially under the age of 30) are unaffiliated with religious organizations (Pew Forum 2012). While these individuals might have had local religious leaders to call upon in the midst of crises in years past, they may now be more likely to work with chaplains during moments of stress or trauma. Chaplains, in turn, may be increasingly caring for people who are more diverse in terms of religious and spiritual background, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, age, and other factors distinguishing the modern demographic from the religious landscape of decades ago. While these indicators do not yet suggest a trend, they call for additional study, particularly study that enables scholars to think about changes over time in the presence and role of chaplains across the kinds of institutions within which they work.

From a scholarly perspective, we view chaplains as one way to consider what Bender and colleagues call religion "on the edge," or the ways spirituality and religion are institutionally present outside of congregations (Bender et al. 2013). Institutional approaches to religion, which map religious life in local, state, and national contexts, tend to focus on congregations, ignoring the ways that religious professionals who are formally attached to nonreligious organizations contribute to the religious ecology of a particular place (Ammerman 2005; Day 2014, Eiesland 1999; McRoberts 2005). The literature about religious professionals as social movement actors, particularly at the local level, also focuses almost exclusively on local clergy rather than chaplains who may be involved in social movements but have no formal connection to congregational or parish service (Jeffries and Tygart 1974; Wood 2002).

Historical and social scientific research about chaplaincy focuses almost exclusively on the work of chaplains in particular sectors—primarily healthcare and the military (Bergen 2004; Cadge 2012; Loveland 2014). Social scientists have devoted limited attention to commonalities and differences in the history and practice of chaplaincy across sectors and to what we can learn from chaplains as a case that helps us think more broadly about American religious life. Winnifred Sullivan’s recent book, *A Ministry of Presence*, is an important exception focused more at the legal and policy level than the everyday (Sullivan 2014; Swift 2015). We begin to focus on the daily work of chaplains by shifting the unit of analysis from sector to place, focusing on chaplains in the Greater Boston area between 1945 and the present. This shift allows us to understand, for the first time, where chaplains in a specific city worked between 1945 and the present, what that work consisted of, and how it changed over time. We focus on Boston using the *Boston Globe* as our source of data. While *Globe* coverage, such as all newspapers, is likely driven more by immediate high-profile events than mundane ones, we use it as the first step in a broader analysis. We think about Boston as a single case study aware that the same questions asked about a southern city with a larger evangelical population or a western city with a less-religious population would likely yield different results.

## BACKGROUND

A broad range of people who consider themselves chaplains are present in Boston and across the country. We begin with the understanding that there is no generally agreed upon definition of chaplain in American public life or culture. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines chaplain as a “clergyman who conducts religious services in the private chapel of a sovereign, lord or high official, of a castle, garrison, embassy, college, school, workhouse, prison, cemetery, or other institution, or in the household of a person of rank of quality in a legislative chamber, regime, ship, etc.” While some chaplains do conduct religious services, such services are no longer the marker of chaplains’ work that this definition implies (Sullivan 2014). Historically and in the present, the background and preparation of chaplains varies. They come from a broad range of spiritual and religious backgrounds with education ranging from online courses to PhDs. Some are formally vetted by the organizations within which they work and are regularly a part of protocols and the essential work of the organizations. Others are little known, even to people involved with these organizations, and their mandates and professional contributions are less clear. Some are full- or part-time employees while others are volunteers (Cadge 2012; Hansen 2012; Holst 1985; Paget and McCormack 2006; Sullivan 2014).

Historically and in the present, chaplains work in the military, healthcare, prisons, municipal settings, workplaces, colleges and universities, and a range of other settings (Beckford and Cairns 2015; Bergen 2004; Berlinger 2008; Hicks 2008; Holifield 2007; Loveland 2014; Otis 2009; Sullivan 2009; Sundt and Cullen 1998, 2002). Research about chaplains focuses by sector and says little synthetically about how chaplains’ work varies by those sectors and institutions. There has been little synthesis. Some scholars have argued that chaplains’ unique positions make a kind of marginality or organizational “in-between-ness” a defining and consistent characteristic of their work (Cadge 2012; Hansen 2012; Paget and McCormack 2006; Sullivan 2014). In his classic *Hospital Ministry: The Role of the Chaplain Today*, Lawrence Holst devoted a whole chapter to how hospital chaplains work “between worlds.” What he calls the “tension” or “enigma” of this organizational position shapes the work: “Each world, or structure, has its own domain and demands, its assumptions and mission” (Holst 1985:12). Ellen Idler and colleagues make a similar point in a more recent empirical study of healthcare chaplains (Idler et al. 2015).

In her recent book, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law*, Winnifred Sullivan traces the first Christian chaplains to military chaplains working for Frankish kingdoms. She describes the history of chaplaincy in the military, prisons, and healthcare, the

settings with the longest histories, under the heading, “Different Institutions, Different Histories, Same Ministry” (2014:64). Military chaplaincy in the United States dates to the Revolutionary War though the full integration of chaplains in the military did not take place until the 20th century. Military chaplains have generally supported military efforts, helped maintain troop morale, and provided spiritual and religious rituals and services. Today, military chaplains are uniformed, noncombatant commissioned officers who have rank but not command and are usually unarmed. Conflicts over the religious demographics of military chaplains, the appropriate place for evangelization, and the role of chaplains in armed conflicts abroad have been and remain heated (Bergen 2004; Loveland 1996, 2014; Sullivan 2014).

In prisons and healthcare organizations, chaplains have historically been closely tied to the religious origins of the institutions. Christian prison reformers in England and the United States are frequently seen as the precursor to today’s prison chaplains, who play a wide range of roles at local, state, and federal levels. Prison chaplains typically combine ministry to prisoners with support for the behavior modification outcomes sought by prisons, making role-tension or what Holst called organizational “in-between-ness” a consistent part of their work (Beckford and Gilliat 1998; Hicks 2008; Sullivan 2009; Sundt and Cullen 2002). With the privatization of prisons, some faith-based social service organizations also provide religious services in prisons alongside or in place of the work of chaplains, ostensibly related to free exercise (though actual practice varies tremendously on the ground) (Dubler 2013; Erzen 2017; Sullivan 2009).

Some religious hospitals had chaplains early on, and the work of chaplains in healthcare has changed significantly over time. About two-thirds of American hospitals have chaplains who provide care for patients, family members, and staff (Cadge, Freese, and Christakis 2008). Increasingly trained in religiously diverse contexts, more and more healthcare chaplains are interfaith in orientation, serving people from a wide range of religious backgrounds (including none). While chaplains are clearly a part of protocols in some healthcare institutions, they are more peripheral in others. Chaplains are most consistently seen in healthcare around end-of-life issues, particularly in palliative care and hospice settings that evoke spiritual assessments and employ many chaplains (Berlinger 2008; Cadge 2012; Puchalski et al. 2009).

Taking a broad view of chaplains and the sectors in which they work, Sullivan describes change in their work as reflective of broader changes in American culture, law, and policy. The work of chaplains is increasingly called “spiritual care,” she argues, “understood to be authorized, even mandated, by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment” (Sullivan 2014:14). This work is therapeutic, inclusive, and self-consciously constitutional. Chaplains often describe their work as a “ministry of presence,” a phrase, Sullivan argues, that holds space for particular kinds of spirituality or religion while simultaneously seeming not to do so at all. In creating this space as what Sullivan calls “secular priests” or “ministers without portfolios,” chaplains have become, she argues, “strangely necessary figure[s] religiously and legally speaking in negotiating the public life of religion today” (Sullivan 2014:6). Chaplains have helped to create a space for a certain kind of spirituality and religion that, to some, seems neutral but to Sullivan remains uniquely American, what she calls a “new establishment” that everyone needs but that can remain in the eyes of some to not be about religion in any way (p. 202).

Sullivan’s arguments are based more on readings of legal case law and policy than on ethnographic research about the daily work of chaplains. Scholars have lacked understanding about how the total number of chaplains has changed over time and about the places and ways in which their work takes different forms. Some chaplains, particularly in the military, play a civil religious role, offering prayers as part of national ceremonies and advancing particular religious-infused notions of the nation—a practice almost unheard of in healthcare, for example. We start to ground Sullivan’s arguments by moving toward a sense of what the work of chaplains has looked like in the Greater Boston area and how it has changed over time.

Today in Boston, individuals who consider themselves chaplains work in hospitals, retirement homes, prisons, the military, the airport, the seaport, colleges and universities, the Veterans

Administration, the Boston Police and Fire Departments, Metro Youth Services, hospices, rehabilitation centers, a range of community organizations, and with the Boston Red Sox and New England Patriots. For the purposes of this article, we define as a chaplain anyone in the Greater Boston area who was identified as a chaplain by the *Boston Globe* between 1945 and the present. Greater Boston includes the city and towns located within the I-95 beltway and the Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay. This clearly excludes many whose work was not covered by the *Globe*; it also likely includes some people who saw themselves more as local clergy than as chaplains. While this approach is far from perfect, it does allow us to ask for the first time broader cross-sector questions about the presence and work of chaplaincy. We exclude chaplains who were only mentioned in obituaries and those mentioned in passing with no other information in order to focus primarily on those who were engaged and active as described by the *Globe*.

We analyze chaplains in the religious context of Boston since World War II, a period that included significant political transformation in the city (O'Connor 1993). The Catholic population grew exponentially in the early postwar years and Archbishop Richard Cushing, the first Boston-born bishop, fostered mutual understanding among Catholics from different ethnic backgrounds and between Catholics and non-Catholics across the city (O'Connor 1998). Catholics started outreach in Spanish first to Puerto Ricans in the 1960s and later to new arrivals from Cuba, Haiti, and Vietnam. Initially shunned by Irish and Italian Catholics, immigrants outnumbered the Irish and Italians in many parishes by the 1990s and congregational demographics shifted accordingly (Johnson 2014). Downtown mainline Protestant congregations remained strong during the early years of this period but have been challenged more recently, even as some denominations and congregations have grown through immigration (Eck 2001). Finally, the Jewish population grew and suburbanized during these years (Sarna and Smith 1995). While demographic data from the recent Pew Forum survey shows that about 30 percent of people in the Greater Boston area are Catholic, there are significant numbers of Protestants (25 percent), Jews (4 percent), Orthodox Christians (2 percent), Muslims (1 percent), and others, creating a diverse context within which chaplains have worked (Cooperman 2015).

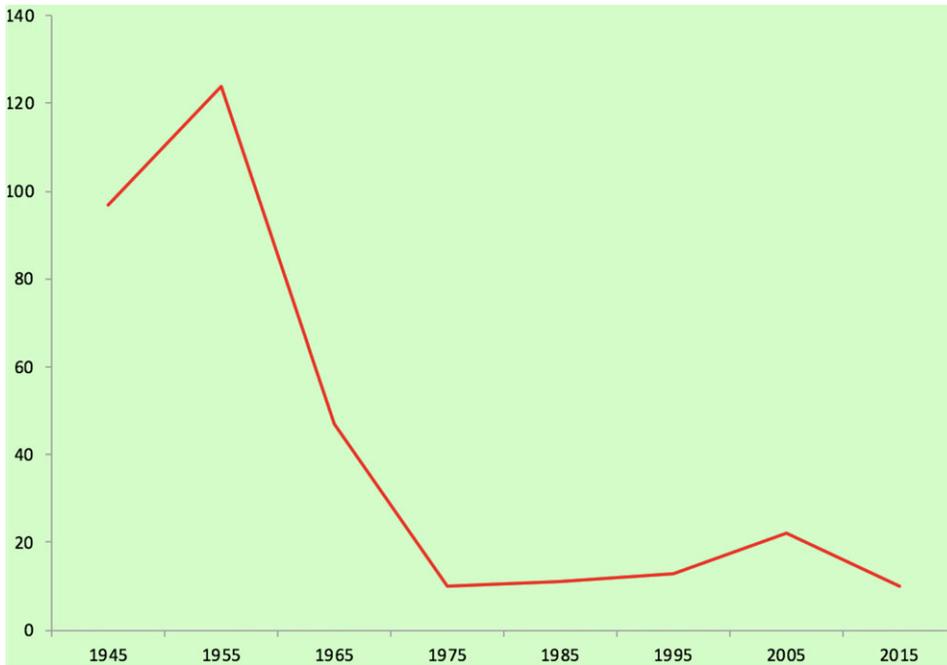
## METHODS

Within this context, we ask where chaplains were present and what forms their work took between 1945 and the present. We use the *Boston Globe* as our source of data, first identifying every mention of the word “chaplain” every 10 years between 1945 and 2015 (i.e., in 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985, 1995, 2005, 2015). Our initial search yielded 2,028 articles in these eight years; we disregarded obituaries. We also disregarded articles that focused exclusively on chaplains who were physically outside of Greater Boston. This reduced our sample size to 548. We began to review these articles and eliminated 214 because they mentioned a chaplain in passing but contained no other information about the person or his or her work. In an article in September 1975 about a football game at Boston College, for example, the reporter noted that a chaplain was present but did not even mention his name (September 16, 1975). These articles did not include enough information about the chaplain to teach us anything about who the person was or what he or she did.

We analyzed the remaining 334 articles in detail. The number of articles that included coverage of a chaplain varied from 10 in 1975 to 124 in 1955 (see Figure 1).

We coded each article in the sample using a standard coding sheet (attached as the Appendix) that allowed us to gather as much information as possible about the chaplain, the sector where s/he worked, what that work consisted of, who the chaplain worked with, and any other relevant information. Because chaplains played different roles in different situations, we coded each article separately (i.e., the article—rather than the chaplain—was the unit of analysis). We used Excel

Figure 1  
 Number of articles mentioned for “chaplain” in the *Boston Globe* in 10-year increments  
 1945–2015 [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



and SPSS to look descriptively at these data and were also able, through the articles themselves, to follow the work of specific chaplains over time.

We did not systematically code bylines, but an analysis of a fraction of these articles suggests few consistent patterns, probably because chaplains are most commonly mentioned in articles about other topics rather than being the main subject of articles covered by (declining numbers) of religion reporters. While reporting changed over time at the *Globe*, ownership was consistent until 1993 when the New York Times Company bought the paper from the Taylor family who had owned it since 1873. After 20 years of ownership, the New York Times then sold the paper and its other New England media properties back to a New Englander, John W. Henry, principal owner of the Boston Red Sox in 2013 (Haughney 2013). We do not see evidence in these data that ownership changes affected reporting about chaplains. We view this as an initial descriptive analysis focused on just eight years, aware that it is but one way of seeing where chaplains have been present in Boston and what their work consisted of, an approach best supplemented by archival research as well as interviews we are conducting as part of a larger book project.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview

We find chaplains—who were mostly men—working across Greater Boston between 1945 and 2015. Of those whose religious affiliation we could determine, the majority were Catholic with regular minorities of Protestants and Jews, and—after 1995—a few Buddhists, Muslims, and Humanists. Most chaplains reported on in the *Globe* worked in higher education, healthcare, and prisons. Smaller numbers were reported working with the police, the fire department, and in nonreligious civic groups—mostly veterans groups such as the American Legion or Veterans of

Foreign Wars. About 85 percent of the articles mentioned one chaplain, 13 percent mentioned two chaplains, and 3 percent represented three or more chaplains. The number of articles that mentioned chaplains declined sharply after the postwar years, as evident in Figure 1.

Articles most consistently described chaplains as working with the staff of various organizations, community members, and members of religious organizations, suggesting their ability to move among and between a range of religious and nonreligious organizations in the city. While much of chaplains' work seems improvisational and varied, we identified ceremonial aspects of it as well as a bearing witness function and death orientation regularly across the time period. While these data only begin to allow us to understand the work of chaplains, they suggest that chaplains have regularly been part of the religious landscape, that their work and roles shift with current events and broader religious change, and that more detailed analyses of particular chaplains or events might allow researchers to develop analytic typologies to more concretely specify their roles.

### Who Are Chaplains?

Chaplains were mentioned in articles in the *Boston Globe* in each of the eight years described in this article. More articles included mention of a chaplain before 1965 than after 1965. Across all the years analyzed, the majority of articles (94 percent) described chaplains who were men, although a few female chaplains were described in 1945 in relation to military and veterans' activities. In a February 1945 article about efforts to create a healthcare facility for veterans in western Massachusetts, for example, Grace P. Broderick was mentioned as the chaplain to the Daughters of Union Veterans that would be conducting a penny sale to support the effort (February 11, 1945). Female chaplains were described more regularly and in a broader range of roles after 1995.

We were able to determine the religious affiliation of about half of the chaplains mentioned, as described in Table 1. Of that half, about half (27.5 percent of the total) were Catholic and a quarter (11.7 percent of the total) were Protestant. The Catholic chaplains were mostly priests. On April 8, 1945, for example, Rev. John M. Tiernan, S.J., acting chaplain at City Hospital, preached at the annual baccalaureate service of the Class of 1945 City Hospital School of Nursing, held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Harrison Avenue in Boston (April 9, 1945). Almost all of the priests mentioned were chaplains to specific institutions, such as Rev. Vincent Gookin S.J., chaplain to the House of the Good Shepherd in Roxbury, who is described in a *Globe* article helping to rescue the tabernacle that held consecrated communion wafers in the midst of a fire (January 28, 1955) and Rev. Thomas J. Tierney, Boston Fire Department Chaplain, who administered last rites to the victim of a fire in February 1955 (February 27, 1955). More recent Catholic chaplains mentioned were connected to local universities and Catholic nonprofit organizations. One notable example was Bernard P. McLaughlin, described in an article in 2005, who was chaplain at Logan Airport (April 3, 2005).

Like the Catholic priests, the Protestant chaplains seem mostly to have been ordained clergy as they were identified in articles as Reverend or Pastor. In November 1945, Rev. Chester Underhill, a chaplain who worked in industry in Quincy, was mentioned in the *Globe* preaching at the Church of the Covenant and Rev. John Barclay, Protestant chaplain to the Boston Fire Department, was on the scene as rescue workers tried to free two men trapped by a freight elevator at the Apt Shoe Manufacturing Company in Dorchester (September 1, 1945, February 9, 1955). In the 1960s, many of the chaplains mentioned in the *Globe* were involved in social protests, including a number of Protestant clergy. Protestant chaplains were also mentioned more recently, such as Rev. Colin Gracey, Episcopal chaplain at Northeastern University, who opened his home to people coming to Boston for medical treatments (August 11, 1995) and Rev. Amy McGreath, Episcopal chaplain at MIT, who had a narrative written about her life and experiences as a chaplain (May 28, 2005).

Table 1: Demographics of chaplains

	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015	Total
<b>Gender</b>									
Men	93(95.9)	123(99.2)	47(100)	10(100)	10(90.9)	8(61.5)	17(77.3)	7(70)	315(94.3)
Women	4(4.1)	1(8)	-	-	1(9.1)	2(15.4)	4(18.2)	3(30)	15(4.5)
Both	-	-	-	-	-	1(7.7)	-	-	1(.3)
Missing	-	-	-	-	-	2(15.4)	1(4.5)	-	3(.9)
<b>Religion</b>									
Catholic	26(26.8)	41(33.1)	11(23.4)	7(70.0)	3(27.3)	1(7.7)	2(9.1)	1(10)	92(27.5)
Protestant	4(4.1)	20(16.1)	9(19.1)	-	1(9.1)	3(23.1)	2(9.1)	-	39(11.7)
Jewish	7(7.2)	9(7.3)	1(2.1)	-	1(9.1)	1(7.7)	2(9.1)	-	21(6.3)
Muslim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(10)	1(.3)
Buddhist	-	-	-	-	-	-	2(9.1)	-	2(.6)
Humanist	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(4.5)	-	1(.3)
Other	2(2.1)	14(11.3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	16(4.8)
Missing	58(59.8)	40(32.3)	26(55.3)	3(30.0)	6(54.5)	8(61.5)	13(59.1)	8(80)	162(48.5)
<i>N</i>	97	124	47	10	11	13	22	10	334(100)

Source: Boston Globe.

Jewish chaplains were also consistently mentioned, in small numbers, in the articles analyzed. Like their Catholic and Protestant colleagues who had formal religious training, the Jewish chaplains were mostly rabbis. Some led local congregations and did chaplaincy work on the side, while others, such as Lt. Com. Jacob Rudin, were full-time chaplains. Rabbi Rudin led the first Jewish Sabbath services at Chelsea Naval Hospital in the summer of 1945 after being assigned to the area following 21 months in the South Pacific (July 28, 1945). Some of the more recent individuals identified as Jewish chaplains were Hillel Directors at Boston area universities.

A few non-Judeo Christian chaplains were also mentioned in the past 10 years whose education varied by tradition. A Buddhist chaplain at MIT was described as part of a group at the institute responding to the tsunami in Sri Lanka (July 24, 2005) and the remarks of a former Muslim chaplain at Northeastern University were described in a 2015 article about him (August 30, 2015).

### **Where Do Chaplains Work and What Is the Work?**

The *Globe* articles about chaplains mentioned work in a range of sectors and institutions. While the largest proportions in the full sample worked in higher education, healthcare, and prisons (roughly 15 percent each), others worked in religious civic groups (10.8 percent), nonreligious civic groups (10.2 percent), and in other contexts (13.8 percent). Smaller but consistent numbers also worked with police and fire departments (Table 2).

Chaplains in higher education were described as performing ceremonial roles, teaching and counseling, and engaging in public discussion and debate across all years. The ceremonies ranged from those not intrinsically religious (such as graduation at Framingham Teachers College on June 3, 1945), to dedications of religious spaces (the MIT chapel on May 9, 1955, for example), to numerous weddings. Chaplains also lectured across the region and hosted gatherings, such as the one held by Kerry A. Maloney, the chaplain at Boston College, at the Massachusetts Bible Society in February 1995 on the topic “Developing a Biblical Spirituality in a Secular Age” (February 18, 1995). Some of the chaplains’ educational work was in formal settings while others took place in informal conversation, particularly with students at area colleges (September 18, 1995).

Chaplains affiliated with colleges and universities were also described as engaging in public debate and discussion about a range of topics and in a range of venues. The Methodist-Baptist chaplain at MIT, Rev. John Russell, coordinated New England clergy to join Martin Luther King in Selma in March 1965. Chaplains from Concord Academy, Northeastern, and Harvard Radcliffe joined hundreds of other Boston area clergy in Alabama. Rev. Russell and others also advocated for voting rights in Washington in 1965 (March 9, 1965, March 12, 1965, March 13, 1965). A few months later, other clergy, including Rev. Edward Hoffer, the Catholic chaplain at Northeastern, interrupted a meeting of the Boston School Committee to talk about racial imbalances in the schools (June 8, 1965). In the 1970s and 1980s, chaplains advancing racial equality discussed moral relativism (September 2, 1975) and the appropriateness of President Reagan’s visit to a West German military cemetery (May 6, 1985). In these and other examples, chaplains acted alongside other Boston area clergy who worked in congregations.

Like chaplains working in higher education, chaplains who worked in healthcare were mentioned in the *Globe* quite regularly over time in connection to their work in hospices, hospitals, retirement homes, nursing facilities, and the Veterans Administration. They also participated in ceremonies, officiated at weddings, and lectured in the region; however, they were rarely mentioned engaging in public debates like those in higher education. A chaplain with the Veterans Administration was quoted in a 2005 *Globe* article helping to educate people about posttraumatic stress disorder (August 17, 2005). There also were many reports about chaplains’ work with individual patients, especially at the end of life (March 13, 1955, August 15, 1965, August 27, 2005).

Table 2: Sectors in which chaplains were identified

Sector	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015	Total
HigherEd	1(1.0)	12(9.7)	19(40.4)	2(20.0)	3(27.3)	6(46.2)	7(31.8)	—	50(15)
Other educational institution	5(5.2)	2(1.6)	3(6.4)	1(10.0)	1(9.1)	—	1(4.5)	—	13(3.9)
Police	1(1.0)	—	—	2(20.0)	4(36.4)	—	1(4.5)	2(20)	10(3)
Fire	1(1.0)	10(8.1)	1(2.1)	2(20.0)	1(9.1)	1(7.7)	1(4.5)	2(20)	19(5.7)
Healthcare	17(17.5)	16(12.9)	7(14.9)	1(10.0)	—	3(23.1)	6(27.3)	—	50(15)
State government	1(1.0)	4(3.2)	—	—	1(9.1)	—	1(4.5)	—	7(2.1)
Religious civic group	11(11.3)	15(21.1)	6(12.8)	—	—	—	2(9.1)	2(20)	36(10.8)
Nonreligious civic group	14(14.4)	13(10.5)	3(6.4)	—	1(9.1)	1(7.7)	1(4.5)	1(10)	34(10.2)
Prison	6(6.2)	41(33.1)	2(4.3)	1(10.0)	—	1(7.7)	—	—	51(15.3)
Private company	—	—	—	1(10.0)	—	—	—	—	1(3)
Other	37(38.1)	6(4.8)	2(4.3)	—	—	—	1(4.5)	—	46(13.8)
Multiple	3(3.1)	5(4.0)	4(8.5)	—	—	1(7.7)	1(4.5)	3(30)	17(5.1)
<i>N</i>	97	124	47	10	11	13	22	10	334(100)

Source: *Boston Globe*.

The prison chaplains mentioned in the *Globe* were mostly mentioned in the context of ceremonial work. In a dramatic exception, Catholic prison chaplain Edward Hartigan and Protestant chaplain Howard Kellett played central mediating roles in a multiday conflict at Charlestown Prison in January 1955. When four prisoners took four guards hostage inside the prison, Father Hartigan accompanied Governor's Councilor Patrick J. McDonough to talks with the inmates. He and the prison physician were the only two people granted "freedom of movement into and out of the embattled building" by the inmates (January 20, 1955). Father Hartigan and Dr. Samuel Merlin also made a long visit with the ringleaders to hear their concerns (January 20, 1955). The press reported: "The priest weary from lack of sleep and constant attempts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the rioting said the convicts were 'very courteous, respectful and talkative, indicating a desire to lay bare their problems'" (January 20, 1955). After 85 hours and many conversations, inmates released the guards and state officials agreed to consider various issues in the penal system (January 22, 1955). In an interview following the events, Father Hartigan told a *Globe* reporter that he preferred to stay in the background, describing the "welfare of prisoners, their hopes and fears" his life's work (January 23, 1955).

*Globe* articles also regularly described chaplains working in both religious and nonreligious civic organizations. Religious organizations included the League of Catholic Women, various Catholic guilds, and religiously supported organizations for veterans, especially in 1945. Non-religious organizations most frequently included the American Legion and various veterans' organizations. Chaplains were consistently described in articles about police and fire departments as providing care to victims in the midst of disasters and leading rituals and services.

The chaplains described in these articles worked with a wide range of individuals and groups as described in Table 3. Just over half of the articles described chaplains working with the staff within organizations (53 percent). Many (39.8 percent) also worked with community members or with members of a religious organization (27.5 percent). Other articles described chaplains working with families (16.8 percent), prisoners (13.2 percent), veterans (12.3 percent), and sick people (7.5 percent). In the majority of articles, chaplains were described working and interacting with multiple groups (Table 4).

To understand how chaplains were described spending their time and in an effort to identify patterns in their roles, we drew on existing research that describes chaplains serving in a variety of functions ranging from presiding at ceremonies, to serving patriotic and civil religious functions, to working around death, or bearing witness to an event (Cadge 2012; Cadge, Clendenen, and Olson 2015; Sullivan 2014; Swift 2015). We coded each article with attention to whether the chaplain served one or more of these functions. About half of chaplains' work was consistent with one of these functions—chaplains were serving ceremonial functions, working around death, or bearing witness to an event. In the other half of cases, chaplains were doing something else—which is also consistent with literature that describes chaplains' work as being largely in response to existing demands and often improvisational. We attempted to code this improvisational work but decided, after repeated attempts, that this work is better described through case studies that will allow us to develop contextually and theoretically informed categories that are meaningful and can be more reliably used going forward. We are working on doing this in combination with interview and case study data gathered as part of our larger project.

Of the functions we identified, a third of the articles described chaplains serving ceremonial functions (33.8 percent). This included presiding at invocations, graduations, memorial services, and a broad range of meetings, as well as offering prayers or addresses in these contexts. In May 1975, for example, the *Globe* reported that Rev. James J. Keating, chaplain of the Boston Fire Department and a "great skipper himself," celebrated a memorial Mass for deceased members of the South Boston Yacht Club and launched opening day activities (May 5, 1975). Thirty years later, in April 2005, the Buddhist chaplain at Massachusetts Institute of Technology spoke about Buddhist monks on campus creating a sand mandala that was assembled and then destroyed to remind observers of the impermanence of all things (April 3, 2005).

Table 3: Who are chaplains working with?

	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015	Total
Families	17(17.5)	4(3.2)	15(31.9)	2(20.0)	4(36.4)	5(38.5)	5(22.7)	4(40)	56(16.8)
Sick	5(5.2)	7(5.6)	2(4.3)	1(10.0)	—	2(15.4)	5(22.7)	3(30)	25(7.5)
Staff	48(49.5)	65(52.4)	29(61.7)	6(60.0)	7(63.6)	7(53.8)	9(40.9)	6(60)	177(53.0)
Community	33(34.0)	31(25.0)	31(66.0)	5(50.0)	8(72.7)	9(62.5)	10(45.5)	6(60)	133(39.8)
Veterans	24(24.7)	7(5.6)	2(4.3)	2(20.0)	1(9.1)	2(15.4)	2(9.1)	1(10)	41(12.3)
Prisoners	5(5.2)	33(26.6)	2(4.3)	1(10.0)	—	1(7.7)	—	2(20)	44(13.2)
Members of religious organizations	44(45.4)	28(22.6)	10(21.3)	—	2(18.2)	4(30.8)	3(13.6)	1(10)	92(27.5)
Others	25(25.8)	28(22.6)	27(57.4)	1(10.0)	3(27.3)	1(7.7)	5(22.7)	3(30)	93(27.8)
<i>N</i>	97	124	47	10	11	13	22	10	334(100)

Source: *Boston Globe*.

Table 4: Content of chaplains' work

	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015	Total
Death	18(18.6)	9(7.3)	7(14.9)	5(50.0)	2(18.2)	4(30.8)	3(13.6)	2(20)	50(15)
Ceremonial	37(38.1)	31(25)	24(51.1)	6(60)	3(27.3)	3(23.1)	5(22.7)	4(40)	113(33.8)
Patriotic	28(28.9)	5(4)	3(6.4)	4(40)	-	1(7.7)	1(4.5)	2(20)	44(13.2)
BearWitness	6(6.2)	24(19.4)	19(40.4)	4(40)	5(45.5)	5(38.5)	9(40.9)	7(70)	79(23.7)
BridgeComm	4(4.1)	22(17.7)	14(29.8)	-	4(36.4)	2(15.4)	4(18.2)	1(10)	51(15.3)
Other	56(57.7)	68(54.8)	31(66)	8(80)	6(54.5)	9(69.2)	11(50)	3(30)	192(57.5)
N	97	124	47	10	11	13	22	10	334(100)

Source: Boston Globe.

More than a quarter of articles described chaplains as bearing witness. We use the term to describe chaplains who were present or made statements at an event naming the deeper meaning or significance of the event (Cadge, Clendenen, and Olson 2015). Of the articles in which a chaplain bore witness, a larger fraction were written after 1975 than before 1975. In 1975, David Noonan, a Catholic chaplain, wrote several letters to the editor in which he bore witness by taking positions on questions of moral relativism and other issues. In 1995, chaplains spoke with the *Globe* about the kinds of issues chaplains on university campuses named and addressed (September 18, 1995). To the extent that this kind of presence is evident in broader samples, it may suggest an expansion in chaplains' roles as the United States has become more diverse and the issues chaplains speak to more expansive.

Additionally, scholars previously argued that chaplains regularly work in the circumstances surrounding death, doing death-work for their institutions (Cadge 2012). Like Wendy Cadge found chaplains in healthcare organizations holding memorial services for the institutions, caring for grieving families, and occasionally working with corpses, we found chaplains working around death across time periods, though in smaller numbers than previous research had led us to expect. They regularly officiated at memorial services for individuals, spoke at annual memorial events for communities, and comforted individuals and their families at the end of life. In March 2015, for example, State Police Chaplain Bill Hamilton opened a memorial service to mark the date of a helicopter crash that killed two Massachusetts State Police troopers and two engineers 20 years prior (March 2, 1956).

We also found chaplains engaged in civil religious work, more in earlier than in later periods (Cadge, Clendenen, and Olson 2015). While some chaplains, like those in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, are facilitators of American civil religion, what we observed mostly focused around chaplains giving speeches at explicitly patriotic events or working with veterans, especially in earlier years. More recently, such mentions involve the American Legion or chaplains in related organizations with civil religious dimensions.

### **Changes Over Time?**

Taken as a whole, the articles we analyzed from the *Globe* invite several tentative conclusions about chaplains and how their work changed over time in Boston. First, the number of mentions of chaplains has declined over time, suggesting either that chaplains are less likely to be present or are doing less work or that they are less likely to be covered in the *Globe* over time. There are three high-frequency years coinciding with the baby boom and the religious revival of the postwar period and then mentions drop off and stay low. To the extent that the presence of chaplains in the military and Veterans Administration is federally mandated by law, some of this may be related to post-World War II efforts to remember and honor veterans, as many articles in 1945 and 1955 demonstrate. The range of people who work as chaplains, according to the *Globe*, also expanded over time, fueled both by the inclusion of women and growing numbers of non-Judeo-Christian, and more specifically non-Catholic, chaplains.

Second, these analyses show that the content of chaplains' work was shaped by the times, as chaplains consistently responded to the issues and challenges of the day. From chaplains who acted in support of civil rights in the 1960s to those who responded to state and national events, the connection between the work of chaplains and contemporary events is tight in media coverage. While more and richer data would provide a more definite outline of changes in chaplains' work over time, based on what we see here, ceremonial work and work around death has been quite consistent. Patriotic and civil religious work was reported on most frequently in the immediate aftermath of war, on significant anniversaries, and around national disasters and crises. Furthermore, the work of bearing witness may be on the rise. The clearest conclusion we can draw about chaplains' work is that it is largely in response to existing circumstances, is often improvisational, and that additional cross-sector analyses will enable us to continue to develop

typologies to help us think analytically about that work. We are working on those analyses in a larger project that includes interviews and archival research about chaplaincy in Greater Boston.

## CONCLUSIONS

Chaplains in Boston, and in cities across the United States, have long worked on the edge of religious and secular organizations. Utilizing Bender et al.'s sociological approach to religion on institutional edges, chaplains' activity in these liminal places helps broaden the range of spaces scholars might observe spirituality and religion and the range of functions they might play—some of them quite public. This approach further expands ecological approaches to religion, from congregations and religiously based organizations to secular organizations where religious professionals still play a role, giving us a more complete understanding of religious life in a given city. Such an approach reminds us that congregations are not the only sites of institutional religious life, and that religious life is a meaningful element even in formally secular or public organizations (Bender et al. 2013). This has likely been the case for longer than scholarly studies have documented it as such.

While research about chaplains within individual sectors describes their work to varying degrees, this analysis is the first to look across sectors and to attempt to assess the sectors where they were reported by the *Boston Globe* to be and might play either the most consistent or the most public roles. While scholars have long known chaplains to be present in healthcare organizations, the military, and prisons, these articles point to the range of other settings where chaplains work that include, particularly in earlier years, noncongregational religious organizations. These analyses describe well about half of what chaplains do when they preside at ceremonies, serve patriotic and civil religious functions, work around death, or bear witness to an event. The other half of their work is largely improvisational. We attempted to code this other work but decided, after repeated attempts, that it is better described through case studies that will allow us to develop contextually and theoretically informed categories that are meaningful and can be more reliably used going forward—case studies we are working on now.

The work of these chaplains furthers our understanding of religion and public life by revealing the range of religious professionals who do that work, the range of organizations through which it takes place, and the fact that in many organizations it takes place regularly as part of the normal work of that organization. Establishing the historical presence of chaplains in these roles will help scholars better assess current changes and see how, as the American population becomes more secular, these roles and the functions they serve have changed over time and may continue to do so in the future.

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## APPENDIX

### Coding Sheet

1. Date of the article YEARMONTHDAY
2. Chaplain name
3. Number of chaplains in the article
4. Gender of chaplain
  - a. 0 = Male
  - b. 1 = Female
  - c. 3 = Multiple
5. Religious tradition of chaplain (coded)
  - a. 1 = Catholic
  - b. 2 = Protestant (Methodist, United Church of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Baptist)
  - c. 3 = Jewish
  - d. 4 = Muslim
  - e. 5 = Hindu
  - f. 6 = Buddhist
  - g. 7 = Humanist
  - h. 8 = Other
  - i. 9 = Multiple
6. Sector within which chaplain is working:
  - a. 1 = University
  - b. 2 = Education not university
  - c. 3 = Police
  - d. 4 = Fire
  - e. 5 = Hospital/healthcare including mental health
  - f. 6 = State government
  - g. 7 = Religious civic group
  - h. 8 = Nonreligious civic group
  - i. 9 = Prison
  - j. 10 = Company
  - k. 11 = Other—write in what it is
  - l. 12 = Multiple
7. Chaplain is doing something related to death
  - a. 0 = No
  - b. 1 = Yes
8. Chaplain is serving a ceremonial function—that is, presiding at a memorial service or wedding, offering a formal blessing or benediction—doing something that is part of a formal ceremony
  - a. 0 = No
  - b. 1 = Yes
9. Who is chaplain primarily working with?
  - a. Families = 0/1 for no yes
  - b. People who are ill = 0/1 for no yes

- c. Staff of the organization = 0/1 for no yes
  - d. Community members = 0/1 for no yes
  - e. Veterans = 0/1 for no yes
  - f. Prisoners = 0/1 for no yes
  - g. Members of a religious organization like a congregation = 0/1 for no yes
  - h. Other = write in (if just present at ceremonies note that here)
10. Chaplain's work connects to patriotic / nationalistic themes
    - a. 0 = No
    - b. 1 = Yes
  11. Chaplain is bearing witness—making some kind of a public statement in word or action:
    - a. 0 = No
    - b. 1 = Yes
  12. Chaplain is helping to build relationships or bridge different kinds of communities:
    - a. 0 = No
    - b. 1 = Yes
  13. Chaplain is serving another function
    - a. Write in what it is
  14. Other notes
    - a. Write in anything else that seems relevant