

# ASA SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

*Newsletter of the Sociology of Religion Section of the American Sociological Association*  
 Kevin D. Dougherty, Editor

## Introducing 2005-2006 Section Chair, Christopher Ellison

The ASA Sociology of Religion Section benefits from the talented scholars who provide direction. This year is no exception. Following the year of service by Roger Finke, Christopher Ellison assumed the post of Section Chair in August. Chris brings a wealth of experience in research and associational leadership.

Chris Ellison is Professor of Sociology and the Elsie and Stanley E. (Skinny) Adams, Sr. Centennial Professor in Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. A native of North Carolina, Chris completed undergraduate and graduate degrees at Duke University. He joined the faculty at the University of Texas in 1991. His appointment at UT spans the Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center. The new Center for the Social Scientific Study of Religion growing out of the Population Research Center owes much of its development to Chris.

The published work of Chris Ellison is expansive. He has more than 75 peer-reviewed articles to his credit as well as nearly a dozen book chapters and two edited books. Three broad areas define his scholarship: (1) religion and health (mental and physical); (2) religion and family (e.g., gender roles, marital relations, childrearing, and domestic violence); and (3) religion and race/ethnicity. He has attracted \$2.8 million of research support.

Chris is no stranger to professional sociology of religion associations. In addition to regular participation as presenter, convener, and discussant, he has a history of leadership in nearly all the major associations in the field. He has served in executive leadership positions for the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Religious Research Association, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. He was a member of an ad hoc committee for the formation of the ASA Sociology of Religion Section in 1993-1994. It seems fitting that a decade later he would chair the Section he helped to found. He is eager to make the Sociology of Religion Section bigger and more vibrant. He welcomes your involvement.



Christopher Ellison, 2005-2006 Section Chair

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*The Sociology of Religion Section of the American Sociological Association encourages and enhances research, teaching, and other professional concerns in the study of religion and society.*

## The Role of Moral Values in the American Presidential Election\*

STEPHEN KALBERG, Boston University

All of Europe has been asking the same question: how could the Americans have elected George W. Bush? In light of a weak economy and a worrisome war in Iraq, what prevented a decisive loss to John Kerry? "Moral values" were declared by 22% of American voters to be the "most important issue" in the election. 20% of the electorate viewed the economy, 19% terror, and 15% Iraq as "most important." What are "moral values" and why were they more important than the war in Iraq?

This essay addresses these questions in a preliminary and abbreviated manner. It contends that a pivotal aspect of the American political culture so difficult to perceive and evaluate from abroad was salient: moral values. If the "American particularism" so manifest in last November's Presidential election is to be even partially comprehended, the crucial role of moral values must be addressed.<sup>1</sup>

"Political-ethical" action came to be uniquely located in the United States in civic associations. These organizations — recognized as ubiquitous since Tocqueville — carried constellations of values diffusely into every corner of American society; in the process they cultivated and rejuvenated a broad-ranging, value-anchored civic sphere. Whether manifest as "public ethics" or "moral values," this arena defended a demarcated realm of activity oriented to ethical ideals against all "routinization" of action in the direction of utilitarian and instrumental calculations.

The uniquely American religious heritage — the values of the ascetic Protestant sects and churches — played a central role. Lacking in Europe or limited geographically in their impact, they must be acknowledged as crucially assisting the birth, expansion, and resilience of the uniquely contoured American civic sphere. Moreover, a widespread belief in God and active church membership to this day interacts with civic associations and reinvigorates them.<sup>2</sup> Owing to a far less profound secularization than in Europe, the original religious cast of the American political culture remains more directly linked, through civic associations, to its present-day form.

Europeans have only rarely taken cognizance of this component of the American political culture; its wide impact has been only infrequently comprehended.<sup>3</sup> In part, those European sociologists who pronounced 100 years ago, with the onset of industrialization and urbanization, the universal demise of religion must be held accountable.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, in the nineteenth century in both Europe and the United States a general weakening of religion's grip had taken place; however, in America a vigorous, unacknowledged "sect legacy," in the form of wide-ranging, quasi-religious civic associations, remained



## 2005 Section Award Winners

### Distinguished Article Award

Prema Kurien, Syracuse University, "Multiculturalism, Immigrant Religion, and Diasporic Nationalism: The Development of an American Hinduism," *Social Problems*, 2004, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 362-385

### Distinguished Book Award

Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Boston University, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (University of California Press, 2005)

### Student Paper Award

Omar Lizardo and Jessica L. Collett, University of Arizona, "Why Biology is Not (Religious) Destiny: A Second Look at Gender Differences in Religiosity"

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powerful.<sup>5</sup> Studies that depart from the major features of present-day European political cultures, and then (knowingly or unknowingly) superimpose their working hypotheses onto the American landscape, distort and downplay this central aspect of the American political culture.<sup>6</sup>

These brief remarks have, in all likelihood, already charted out the contours of a political culture scarcely imaginable to the European observer. More detailed discussion, and a *verstehende* analysis, is required. How can the particular content of the American civic sphere be defined? How are its religious and quasi-religious values manifest even today? How did one of its crucial ingredients — “moral values” — become radically manifest in the 2004 election? Scrutiny of the American political culture’s central parameters will illustrate the many ways in which deeply anchored “moral values” came to the forefront in the past Presidential election. Examination of four themes proves indispensable: the high salience of “moral character” among candidates for political office, the widespread belief that “problems can be solved,” the nature of American provincialism, and the ways in which moral values become manifest in social policy discussions.

### 1) *The American Candidate: The High Salience of “Moral Character”*

The asceticism of the Protestant sects and churches left strong legacies in respect to personal conduct. The devout believer of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew that an omnipotent, omniscient, and wrathful God stood in judgment over all behavior, and that any transgression from the righteous pathway would be immediately registered and punished by members of his congregation. Moreover, an ethical lapse could not be absolved through the Confession and social excommunication remained a feared possibility. Thus, “psychological rewards” (Weber) were bestowed upon the strict cultivation of a stern and “upright” demeanor, and all conduct became subject to both an internal (the conscience aware of God’s standards) and an external (the religious community’s close observation) monitoring. By the seventeenth century the belief crystallized that the very capacity of the devout to conduct themselves in a “respectable and dignified” manner itself testified to God’s presence within—and surely he would convey this capacity only to the predestined. And, owing on the one hand to the absence of intermediaries to assist believers in their quest for a certainty of their salvation and, on the other hand, to the necessity for “activity in the world,” Protestant asceticism placed massive incentives upon a self-reliance ethos of individual responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

This rigorous disciplining of the believer’s entire way of conducting his life — this asceticism — became less intense in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Legacies remained nonetheless, and the “respectable demeanor,”

even if uninfluenced by sincere belief and no longer monitored by cohesive congregations, became a recognizable standard for proper conduct.

Vivid residuals of the ascetic posture are visible even today, albeit in tempered and secularized forms. The character of persons who seek to lead their communities, in whatever domain of life, must exhibit a certain “upright” quality. A demeanor that outwardly demonstrates moral rigor, honesty, and trustworthiness must be manifest, for this conduct testifies, it is widely perceived, to a capacity to act consistently in reference to a set of firm values. Continuity of behavior over the course of adulthood is viewed as proving the presence of a firm moral compass. Clarity of purpose and a clear-cut resolve is equated with a straightforward mode of decision-making, as well as candor both with one’s God and in human relationships.

Exemplary moral character, of course, can be “proven” not only through a respectable demeanor. Regular church attendance and adherence to a conventional mode of life also serve this purpose. The exemplary personal situation (the impeccable past, the dignified wife, the well-behaved and respectful children, the long-term marriage) must be exhibited.

Much more successfully than John Kerry, George Bush created an image of his present and past as in conformity with this asceticism-rooted constellation of behavioral standards. Moreover, his capacity to convey direct and uncomplicated proposals to social problems, which contributed to an image of “frankness and candor,” far surpassed the ability of John Kerry to do so; indeed, the senator from Massachusetts was regularly accused of obscurity and inconsistency. The Bush campaign cultivated an image of strength, self-reliance, certainty, and “moral backbone” for its candidate, and John Kerry was portrayed as a “fuzzy,” vacillating, and unreliable thinker prone to embrace contradictory proposals.

Voters repeatedly complained “one doesn’t know where [Kerry] stands” and regularly praised the “trustworthiness and directness” of George W. Bush. Surely the reins of power could not be handed over to someone lacking a firm resolve and liable to switch positions frequently—not least because such “flip-flopping” in the end conjured up doubts regarding the candidate’s ethics, character, and capacity for decisiveness. The nation must be guided, the Bush campaign asserted, by a resolute leader acting with consistency on behalf of trusted values. “Good” and “evil” are clear-cut and must be proclaimed without uncertainty or ambivalence, George Bush insisted. Strength of character demanded doing so. In a political landscape influenced to this day by asceticism, the unwavering message itself acquired a positive valence, indicated a “strong moral character,” and resonated widely.



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The long historical reach of the ascetic Protestant churches and sects, as mediated over civic associations, is apparent in a related manner. The American background context — “high moral character and trustworthiness are indispensable” for political office — pushed to the margins an entire set of voter considerations central in European political campaigns; namely, competency as measured by professional expertise and command over a body of knowledge. While both Al Gore and John Kerry proved masters of obscure minutiae in innumerable policy fields, George Bush possessed only a weak command of the major issues—yet this never proved detrimental. Such an electoral outcome between asymmetrically qualified candidates is scarcely imaginable in the European context, where politicians are normally masters over a range of policy arenas and professional, life-long, and well-trained public servants.<sup>8</sup>

Residual components of ascetic Protestantism — a firm resolve in respect to values and standards, consistency over the long-term, “good moral character,” etc. — were unusually manifest in the 2004 campaign. They proved more influential than foreign (the war in Iraq) or domestic (the economy) issues on the one hand or professional expertise, international experience and knowledge, and mastery over policy details on the other hand.

## 2) Problems Can Be Solved

Members of ascetic Protestant churches and sects were given an unequivocal task by their God: to create, in order to praise His majesty and glory, His righteous kingdom on earth. This task remained unquestioned by sincere and devout believers, for the motives of this inscrutable God could not be doubted. And surely widespread abject poverty would not extoll His greatness. Communities of wealth, abundance, and justice in accord with His commandments must be erected. Moreover, those who proved in business transactions unusually capable of creating wealth knew that their “good fortune” appeared not alone from their systematic labor; rather, an omnipotent and omniscient Deity, it was believed, must have provided the capacity to work methodically and the opportunity to acquire profit—He must have favored this believer. And God would assist only those who belonged among the predestined elect. Failure in business and employment occurred, but the devout must “pick themselves up by their bootstraps” and undertake, on His behalf and in order to establish His kingdom, a new endeavor.

A “world mastery” individualism crystallized in this manner.<sup>9</sup> The ascetic Protestant acted “in the world” in order to fulfill God’s commandments and, moreover, because concerned to create His “city on the hill” and a psychological certainty of his own salvation, could not allow external difficulties to defeat his chosen “mission.” “Problems” and “obstacles,” the devout were convinced,

were simply God’s “challenges” designed to test the believer’s faith and dedication. What should be done on His behalf can be done. And if strong individuals prove unable to tame difficulties and to move ahead, then initiatives must be taken to establish groups dedicated to surmounting the large obstacles and fulfilling the mission.

Discrepancies between ideals — abundant communities, compassion for all, social justice and equality, for we are all His children — and empirical realities must be addressed. On behalf of God’s greater glory, injustice must be banished from His kingdom. Neglect or postponement fail to honor the religious obligation. Indeed, avoidance of initiative-taking against injustice constitutes a sign that the individual has not been penetrated by God’s strength—and hence cannot be among the predestined elite.

As this “can do” posture, and optimistic frame of mind in respect to the individual’s capacities, gradually lost religious significance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ascetic Protestant’s organization of life around tasks, work, competition, and profit shed an element of methodicalness. Yet the fading from view of the all-important question — “am I among the saved” — left in its secular wake both an energetic approach to problem-solving and a stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge the complexity of large tasks or the possibility that some deeds cannot be completed. Mastery, rather, would require simply more effort or, perhaps, a different approach or strategy; or improved skills, management, and technology. Civil associations were needed to address community-wide problems; practicing “teamwork,” groups and organizations could confront the challenge. Even the most difficult mission can be addressed and solved given this societal-wide proclivity to formulate civic associations; even the exploration of outer space and distant planets depends alone on financing, expertise, and manpower. “Put your mind to it and you can do it.” “You are strong; make something of yourself.” The individual’s chosen slice of reality must be shaped and molded to conform to a noble constellation of values.

This problem-solving orientation and search for the “appropriate strategy” dominates, of course, political debate in all nations. However, a more concentrated intensity characterizes political activity in those regions historically influenced by ascetic Protestantism. Indeed, a propensity to “overestimate” capacities to surmount obstacles would seem probable wherever ascetic Protestantism or its legacies are influential. Similarly, a tendency to “underestimate” the complexity of large tasks would seem likely.

Candidates who seek elected office in political cultures “predisposed” in these ways must remain optimistic regarding outcomes and focused on problem-solving. Such a posture proves “realistic” and such candidates “trustworthy” in light of this political culture’s parameters

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and values, for public opinion is inclined to favor candidates who hail the likelihood of success and the pragmatic mechanisms to attain it. Agonizing about possible setbacks and doubts regarding the mission, as well as scenarios describing potential difficulty and defeat, must be avoided by candidates. Although a large and complex endeavor, the task at hand — victory in Iraq, for example — requires a tenacious stubbornness and a firm resolve in the face of challenges. A favorable result is assured, however, it is widely believed, if these qualities are brought to bear.

George Bush far more effectively conveyed this upbeat message: shape the situation and mold the outcome, and do so by reference to undoubted values. Similarly, his further messages — “a strong leader in these difficult times” is necessary and “don’t change horses in midstream” — also resonated with these deep American cultural chords.

### *3) Social Policy: The Salience and Importance of Moral Values*

Characteristic of the ascetic Protestant faithful was an unusually rigorous interpretation of scripture and doctrine. Moreover, as noted, this devout believer felt a compelling obligation to organize his life systematically in accord with God’s laws. A general orientation to the Commandments would not suffice; rather, action, thought, and religious decree must be brought into a relationship of strict consistency. In addition, because the opportunity to confess one’s sins no longer existed, any temporary deviation from the righteous path could not be permitted. An uninterrupted “watchfulness” over one’s own behavior, as well as the conduct of others, must be maintained.

This moral rigor existed almost exclusively in devout communities of seventeenth-century New England. Yet echoes and legacies endured, passed across the generations in tempered and secular forms by schools, professional organizations, and varieties of civic associations. “Standards” for proper conduct had been established, and strong residuals of early ascetic Protestant norms were apparent in all definitions of acceptable behavior in eighteenth and nineteenth century communities.

Although altered further by the social transformations accompanying twentieth century urbanization and industrialization, enduring social carriers — civic associations, as well as ascetic Protestant churches and sects — ensured that a strictness in respect to ideal behavior would be periodically rejuvenated.<sup>10</sup> Acceptable standards were now codified for the workplace (“codes of conduct”) and in varieties of professional associations (the American Medical Association, The Bar Association, The American Psychological Association, etc.). Employees and members were expected to abide by ethical standards that demarcated appropriate “moral conduct.” Designated committees were empowered to punish harshly, and even banish, members in violation of acceptable “honor codes.”

Sanctions generally brought careers to a sudden conclusion.

In this way, the moral rigor practiced by ascetic Protestants, albeit in less strict manifestations, remained viable across generations. These organizations, as well as general appeals to “community standards” and their enforcement agencies, cultivated an awareness of and sensitivity to questions of ethical conduct. “Standards in public life” applied not only to political figures. A broad-ranging rejuvenation, although secular, of the “sect legacy” occurred periodically in this manner.

The extreme salience of moral values in the November, 2004, election becomes plausible to the outside observer only if the ascetic Protestant imprint upon the political culture of the United States is again acknowledged. Moral issues assumed a degree of intensity that can be comprehended only by reference to this deep historical, and uniquely American, dynamic. Whether prayer in the public schools should be permitted constituted a major electoral topic in many regions; deep concerns were evident throughout the nation in respect to sex and violence on television, abortion, stem-cell research, and single-sex unions (gay marriage).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, referenda on whether “gay marriage” should be legal were on the ballot in eleven states; all were defeated. Overarching the entire moral values debate was a posture first articulated by the early religious settlers: moral choices are ones of conscience and governments must not intervene in this private realm.

On these issues as well George Bush succeeded in portraying John Kerry as “wavering” and “inconsistent”—and hence untrustworthy. The same questions were raised repeatedly: “Where does he stand?” “Where is his moral backbone? His integrity?” “What are his standards and convictions?” “Why are his answers to moral questions complex rather than straightforward?” “Will he allow the government to make fundamentally private decisions?” Convinced that rural voters would more likely appreciate George Bush’s candor, moral rigor, and prescriptive positions, Karl Rove, the Bush campaign strategist, organized voter registration drives over a four-year period that targeted rural citizens in swing states.

### *4) American Provincialism: Its Unique Features*

The widespread orientation toward individual achievement, the mastery of tasks, and the “fulfillment of one’s self” through work all belong in the United States to the ascetic Protestant heritage. An intensity of focus, a steadfast orientation to the goal at hand, and a methodical organization of life had characterized devout believers. “Activity” and accomplishment, they knew, must be pursued systematically; idleness serves no useful purpose either in the eyes of God or for one’s personal salvation.

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European visitors have commented for 200 years upon the industriousness of the Americans. Many observers have queried why social chaos has not followed from the sheer dynamism of life in the United States. Yet this energy, however significant its contribution alike to the "land of opportunity" credo and massive national wealth, has also in part shaped a widespread provincialism—if only because the intensity of daily life locks Americans deeply within its grip. The ascetic Protestant focus upon activity and orientation to an overarching conviction—that the individual can, through hard work and a planned organization and directing of life, construct his own destiny—itsself erects barriers against awareness of "the other" beyond America's firm boundaries. Thus, although grounded also in a lack of knowledge and international experience, the provincialism of the Americans locates its roots primarily in the encompassing, dynamic, and self-sustaining intensity of daily life in the United States. Work engages Americans deeply, and constitutes a source of genuine commitment. Indeed, one's work establishes life's meaningful foundation and, for many in the upper middle class, a commitment to one's occupation pushes family, friendship, and leisure to the margins.<sup>12</sup>

Anchored in activities, tasks, and the "getting ahead" ideal's self-absorption, this provincialism is ironically bolstered by a maxim heard frequently across the nation: "we are all basically alike." The cultural origins of this inclusionary ethos must be traced back to ascetic Protestantism's universalism—that is, to the rigor of the ascetic's adherence to the decree "we are all God's children"—rather than to the American political heritage, for it implies a far more expansive universalism—namely, the conviction that we are alike throughout the world. And this overarching similarity, it is widely held, would become quickly evident if only those few opposed to it—authoritarian and divisive rulers—were overthrown. The establishment then of democratic self-governance anchored in notions of individual rights and personal liberties, which are believed to be sought universally and intensely, would closely follow.

Hence, although containing a high dosage of self-orientation and a low dosage of knowledge concerning other cultures, the lineage of American provincialism cannot be located in particularistic ideologies, such as Social Darwinism, or doctrines of ethnic, racial, national, or religious superiority; instead, and unexpectedly, an unequivocal universal ideal constitutes a major ingredient.<sup>13</sup> This combination—a deep immersion in a fast-paced and all-encompassing daily life of such self-sustaining intensity that obstacles against awareness of other societies and ways of living are erected, and an undoubted conviction that the universal expansion of foundational American values benevolently serves the yearnings and best interests of persons around the globe—powerfully thrusts "the American way of life" beyond the

borders of the United States. Even the Vietnam War failed to call forth the measure of skepticism and self-doubt requisite for distance upon this mighty indigenous logic devoid of substantive internal inhibiting mechanisms, let alone its critical evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

Simultaneously, any widespread comprehension that political and social problems beyond the boundaries of the United States present complex difficulties to American missionary idealism (see Kalberg, 1991, 2003) is precluded by the task orientation, problem-solving, and optimistic "can do" frame of mind deeply anchored in the ascetic Protestant heritage. Thus, the preconditions for an acknowledgement that some nations, owing to particular historical and cultural developments quite at variance with the American experience, might not share—or cannot share—American values seem non-existent.

The campaign message of George Bush resonated strongly with this provincialism deeply anchored in the American world view. Although largely sharing these beliefs, John Kerry's articulation of them often seemed to contain an element of doubt and to be lacking genuine conviction.

### Conclusion

This essay has sought, in telescoped form, to delineate several aspects of "American particularism" in order to clarify the salience of moral values in the November, 2004, election victory of George Bush. It has focused on the particular impact even today of ascetic Protestant legacies upon the American political culture. Only infrequently acknowledged in European discussions of this election or, indeed, of "American uniqueness," few echoes of this heritage have influenced European political cultures.

A more comprehensive analysis of the American political culture would identify prominent regional differences and evaluate the extent to which the nation is presently severely divided. An explanation for the weakened role, compared to Europe, of intellectuals in electoral politics, would also be indispensable.<sup>15</sup> Foreign observers must practice caution and avoid a transposition of the presuppositions of their own political cultures onto the American case. Fundamentally unique, the political culture of the United States must not be perceived as similar to either "European political culture" generally or the particular political cultures of, for example, France, Germany, or Holland.

### Endnotes

\* This essay was originally a postscript to the publication in French of "The Influence of Political Culture Upon Cross-Cultural Misperceptions and Foreign Policy: The United States and Germany" (see Kalberg, 2003; *Revue du MAUSS* 25 [April, 2005], pp. 207-40). It is recommended that the American reader consult the German Politics article for the full theoretical framework for the argument developed below. The American reader should bear in mind that the essay aims to explain a quite foreign political culture to the French reader.



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<sup>1</sup>The Bush campaign succeeded, to its great advantage, in linking international terrorism and the war in Iraq together into a single, seamless web. An extended discussion of this theme, which is indispensable for a full understanding of this election, however, must await a separate analysis. See Danner, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> A far higher percentage of citizens in the United States believe in God than in other countries (approximately 94%). Gallup polls routinely report that roughly 40% of Americans report attending church services weekly. See Hadaway, Kirk, Marler, and Chaves, 1993. The massive differences between the United States and Europe along this devout—secular spectrum can scarcely be overestimated.

<sup>3</sup> Max Weber appears to be, among the classical founders of Sociology, the clear exception. Remarkably, while emphasizing the unique extent to which civic associations were developed in the United States, in comparison to Europe, Tocqueville failed to see their origin in the Protestant sects. See Kalberg, 1997, pp. 209-18.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, proponents of the view that secularization and industrialization advance in tandem have all been European theorists (such as Toennies, Durkheim, Spencer, and Simmel).

<sup>5</sup> On the linkage between the early Protestant churches and sects on the one hand and civic associations on the other hand, see Weber, 1985; 2002b.

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, more recently recognition in Europe of the unusual content and endurance of the civic sphere in the United States — that is, the continuing capacity of its values to orient public sphere action — has been occluded owing to social changes over the last twenty years: those engines of the European civic sphere traditionally engaged in the cultivation of values — political parties and unions — have become less influential.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph is indebted to Weber, 2002a, pp. 103-24; 2002b.

<sup>8</sup> A further analysis of cross-cultural variation in respect to the salience and importance of specialized knowledge in electoral campaigns would need to emphasize not only the ascetic Protestant heritage, but also an array of additional factors, such as the influence of the American “achievement society” characterized by comparatively high levels of long-range occupational mobility and open labor markets, as well as widespread populism and social egalitarianism. All contribute significantly to the American mistrust of professional politicians, policy experts, government bureaucrats, and intellectuals (see n. 13).

<sup>9</sup> Here Weber’s argument is followed, albeit in only the briefest outline. See Weber, 2002a, pp. 103-24; see Kalberg, 1996; 2002; 2003, pp. 148-52.

<sup>10</sup> Bellah’s charting out of an American “civil religion” largely neglects the asceticism component at its foundation. The rejuvenation of this civil religion (through holidays, etc.) could not occur without residuals of this element. See Bellah, 1963.

<sup>11</sup> According to recent polls, 63% of parents are very concerned regarding the depiction of sex on television; 53% regarding the depiction of violence.

<sup>12</sup> The positive and negative outcomes of this orientation cannot be addressed here.

<sup>13</sup> That the United States continues to be a point of destination for millions of immigrants every year indirectly contributes to this provincialism: the immigration of so many itself confirms the idea among Americans that the nation is on the right track. It also justifies the internal, rather than international, focus of Americans. American prosperity and a strong American economy can be viewed in the same manner.

<sup>14</sup> The “broken” world view of the post-war German nation stands at the other end of this “national identity” spectrum.

<sup>15</sup> This large and complex theme — the role of the intellectuals — must be reserved for an extended analysis. However, two points may be offered in the context of the overall position articulated here. (1) The posture of the intellectual as a critic of established politics is familiar in Europe. Indeed, the self-definition of intellectuals, and the obligation that follows, is unequivocal in Europe: to monitor political life and to hold public figures accountable.

An exclusive orientation in this direction is less apparent for American intellectuals, however. Again, the primary location of political-ethical action in the United States diffusely in innumerable civic associations, rather than explicitly and nearly exclusively in political parties and the state, proves critical, for on the one hand it favored populism and diminished the status of all elites, including the men of letters, and on the other hand pluralistically scattered the criticisms of intellectuals. Their task as political commentators and critics constituted only one endeavor among many. In other words, rather than “political critic,” the intellectual in America assumes far more than in Europe the mantle of general “social critic.” A focusing of the intellectual’s critical posture upon the realm of politics, to the extent common in Europe, occurs only in situations of extreme political distress in the United States.

Moreover (2), even if American intellectuals shared with their European counterparts a focus upon the state, the tasks it undertakes, and the political realm generally, men of letters in the United States would be less respected than intellectuals in Europe and their voices would remain less prominent. The major location of political-ethical action at a different level — again, diffusely in multiple civic associations — itself erects barriers against any consistent favoring over time of the voices of any particular group. Rather, a great cacophony characterizes the dynamic and restless American scene—and the message of the intellectual (if granted access) is weighted only marginally stronger (if at all) than that of other articulate individuals (such as talk show hosts, journalists, those in possession of specialized knowledge, media celebrities, etc.). That American political life has never been directly filtered through Left and Right “world view” political parties has also circumscribed the influence of intellectuals. This theme deserves wide-ranging treatment.

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## The Import of New Religious Movements

by RANDALL KARLEN ROGERS, New School University

In studying New Religious Movements or NRMs, one detects the same influences that lead sectarians, or fundamentalists, to break away from more mainstream churches. That is, a desire to return to the roots or the original or pure interpretation of scripture or whatever ideology or belief system may be under consideration. Except in the case of NRMs, the adherents often go beyond the tenets of whatever faith or ideology they may have sprang from, forming new interpretations of old ideas or creating wholly new faiths often from ideas gleaned from science fiction. Yet the dynamic among sectarians, fundamentalists, and creators of or followers of NRMs remains the same: a greater certainty regarding adherents' faith is desired. Certainty is in the case of NRMs, being considered odd religions by more mainstream thought and religions, the certainty that the odd interpretation of scripture or the holding of unconventional beliefs is the true correct way of believing or behaving thus serves as a salve, an opiate if you will, that allows believers a measure of ease, of satisfaction, in the multi-role and multi and conflicting messages sent out by the postmodern consumer culture that is the era we in the advanced industrial capitalist nations now live in. I therefore postulate in this paper that what I term 'the certainty principle' and peoples' desire for certainty in their life will make the future of religion to be not an increase in secularization but an increase in the number of types of religious belief or a fragmentation of religious belief and a corresponding increase in the intensity and commitment of followers of a specific creed, ideology or religious canon. The remainder of this paper will outline the case for my belief in the increased need for and implementation of this principle of 'certainty' ruling individual's lives.

### *Atomization and the Need for Community*

It was Ferdinand Tönnies who popularized the idea of the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* societies. The *Gemeinschaft* society was the close knit organization of the tribe, the small town, social systems where affective ties were more important than instrumental relations. In the *Gesellschaft* society affective ties have been largely severed, replaced by the law of contract, and instrumental cost-benefit measures and rational behavior the ideas carrying the day. Standard of living, measured mostly in economic terms, in this conceptualization replaces quality of life as the leading indicator of so-called 'happiness'. Yet, as social philosophers from Herbert Marcuse to Fredric Jameson have written extensively on, the material happiness that has come with an increase in wealth or standard of living has brought with it its own set of problems, the dreaded unanticipated consequences. These are anomie, a sense of normlessness or meaninglessness that seems to permeate

life when one has the time or leisure to think about such things or to use the psychiatrist's phrase, to ruminate on them. When one has the time and is thoughtful enough to consider ideas as the meaning of life, or one's role in whatever meaning life is held to have, this is the time where faith and religion, or strongly held beliefs in secular humanism, an ideology such as socialism-capitalism, or some other life affirming set of views – even atheism – give their solace.

In a tribal or small community organization each person is a valued and integral member of society. Such interconnectedness is a salve against anomie, loneliness, and anxiety concerning one's fate. Native peoples' religions often if not always conceptualized life and the cosmos as circular and interconnected – a more postmodern view, than Descartes' view of individualism and the Enlightenment thinkers ideas of using reason to isolate and understand – the modern view. Atomization is the term for a reliance on individualism, the lack of integration of the individual in the social system. One is just another cog in the machine, easily replaced, often not even knowing their immediate neighbors. The individual is merely an atom, among many, consuming and working to get the money to consume; a mostly apolitical person unable to achieve real happiness or satisfaction among a plethora of consumer goods and happiness options available to the person. What direction is found in life is not found anymore or defined by one's class, one's occupation, one's church, family or school. Where one does find direction in life is increasingly left to ethnic or lifestyle choices and the groups that form around them, sports or other leisure pursuits, and organizations one is affiliated with. An increasing number of people are given their direction and outlook on life by the growing number of NRMs that are arising to meet peoples' spiritual needs (Dawson, 2003). To answer the big questions in life, questions of an existential nature, questions that in a final reduction belong to the supernatural, NRMs are fulfilling the role in a changing fragmented society that the older traditional religious denominations once fulfilled (Dawson, 1998). As society changes and science discovers more and more the cause behind what was once given a supernatural cause, religion has been forced to change to meet these new scientific 'truths'. UFO religious groups, for example, reflecting the rise of the technological society and space travel, are the fastest growing NRM type (Heard, 1999; Lewis, 2004). In most of these groups 'space brothers' or beings from another planet or galaxy either created life on Earth or, in an eschatological sense, will come to save the select believing few when the final End Times are upon us.



NRMs, continued from p. 8

### *NRMs and the Potential for Violence*

If one reads the literature on NRMs and the case histories of those who join extreme or totalistic religious groups, many of the individuals who eventually join these groups were motivated by a period of seekership, and an inability to find true happiness in the modern or postmodern world. Everyday life just wasn't fulfilling for them and traditional religious venues proved inadequate to meet their deep spiritual needs. It is for these people, people seeking a sense of community and certainty regarding their position in the scheme of life, wherein lies the appeal of NRMs (Holden, 2002).

Generally NRMs are broken up into two categories. There are groups that propose a retreat from secular life and those, more in the human potential mode, that allow for more of an interaction with 'worldly' matters (Dawson, 1998). A totalistic group is a group that has strong in-group-out-group boundaries, members are often separated from larger society, they are often led by a charismatic leader and they hold apocalyptic or millenarian views of a coming End Time for the earth and its inhabitants. In recent times groups that have the most potential for violence against wider society or themselves have possessed these three qualities.

The literature and case studies have found that the best way to diffuse a situation of potential violence between NRM members and social control agencies is to appeal to the NRM members belief system (Bromley, 2002). NRM leaders such as David Koresh may have been prevented in persisting in or engaging in violence if negotiators understood Koresh's definition of the situation in terms of his beliefs of his and his group's role in fulfilling the biblical book of Revelation.

### *Conclusion*

An individual's need for a sense of certainty in his or her life are differently fulfilled in these two different types of NRM. In a totalistic group such as the Family also known as the Children of God, certainty is a result of a limiting of life choices, and a centering of one's energies on the healing powers of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Chancellor, 2000). Groups that segregate members from wider society appeal to the seeker who wants to devote his or her life to praise of God and living among a community of like minded individuals. Less totalistic groups, groups such as Scientology, appeal to members need for certainty in controlling their reactions to difficulties in life that formerly prevented them from achieving their full potential. They do this by teaching behavior modification techniques that allow one to control or eliminate non-productive reactions to situations encountered in life.

My point in writing this short piece is to urge social scientists to more adequately understand the nature and need for certainty, in an ontological sense, in one's life. With an ever widening possibilities of lifestyle choices, consumer choices, and increasing wealth in the advanced industrialized countries of the world a concomitant sense of anomie, an atomization, and a meaninglessness pervades a life when life gets too easy and people have time enough to think about the supernatural aspects of life. It is in these circumstances and times that a need for certainty, a belief and strong faith in a system of ideas or a cosmology, or merely the certainty of the need to bond in a community of like believers, is arguably most needed. And herein lies the attraction of religion and due to the circumstances iterated above, the current attraction of NRMs. In a social system

**In a social system that atomizes its population... the religious impulse will morph into new ways of expressing the need for certainty in a finite life.**

that atomizes its population, when community and tradition are weakened, the attraction and certainty that NRMs can foster in their followers means that NRMs and religion in general will not lose out to an increased secularization, but the religious impulse will

morph into new ways of expressing the need for certainty in a finite life.

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## Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, August 16, 2005, Philadelphia

Convened at 1:34 p.m. by Chairperson Roger Finke. 57 people in attendance.

Report by Program Committee:

Program Committee Members: Darren Sherkat, Penny Edgell, John Bartkowski

39 submissions for sessions; unknown # of submissions for roundtables

Important: The submission process via ASA failed massively, large numbers of errors, papers lost, etc. We do not know what happened exactly. Also: probably the majority of papers that were supposed to be forwarded from one section to another never made it there. Whoever takes over as Program Chair should be aware of this, intervene to prevent it from happening again.

Awards Committee Report:

*Book Award committee:* Joy Charlton, Fenggang Yang, Kevin Christiano. 18 nominated books, very good quality; most submitted by publishers. Many solid worthy enviable books; final consensus on Nancy Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and their Partners* 2005, University of California.

*Article Award committee:* Jim Beckford, Wendy Cadge, Michael Young. 11 submissions. Unanimously chosen winner: Prema Kurien, "Multiculturalism, Immigrant Religion, and Diasporic Nationalism: The Development of an American Hinduism" in *Social Problems*, Vol 51, No. 3, 362-385, 2004.

*Student Paper committee:* Dan Olsen, David Smilde, Patricia Wittberg. Omar Lizardo & Jessica L. Collett, "Why Biology is not (Religious) Destiny: A Second Look at Gender Differences in Religiosity" – not yet published.

Newsletter Report:

Kevin Dougherty reported very smooth transition, great help from former Editor David Smilde in making the hand-over. Suggested transition to electronic newsletter. Biggest issue: Expense of sending it out, and very long delay between submission of newsletter and it being sent out. Less significant, but maybe important: electronic format would allow better graphics and hyperlinks. Downsides: ASA limits # and size of attachments, and some members prefer paper newsletters.

Financial Report:

Richard Wood reported on financial status of the Section, and on the alternatives available to balance the budget for the coming year (see Council Meeting minutes, separate document; essentially, go to all-electronic newsletter format, reduce scale of section reception at ASA, or move location of reception out of ASA hotel).

Discussion: Rhys Williams: ASA promises the electronic optional format will be available in the next year.

Suggestion: Hold reception jointly with ASR.

Transition year: we need to offer a printed version for now, it appears. Let's try to encourage folks to adopt the digital format.

Motion: That Council work to decrease expenses before moving to increase dues.

No action on motion to raise dues; motion withdrawn

Discussion: ASA has an elaborate process for determining cost of newsletters. Not clear we can save much money with an optional digital/print format.

Straw poll: how many very much want to receive print newsletter?: 3 persons

Revised motion: "That Council move to abolish the print newsletter, and move to a full digital format." Motion passed on a voice vote.

Chair-Elect Report:

Chair-elect Chris Ellison reported location for ASA meetings in 2006 still undetermined, but we think we're going to Montreal...It's an honor to follow Roger Finke and before Mark Chaves. We're already working together well.

Committees already in place for 2006:

- Program Committee: Penny Edgell, chair; Mark Regnerus, Brad Wilcox, Fenggang Yang
- Roundtables: John Cavendish

One session on family; others open, I think. Some talk of working with Family Section to set up a joint session.

Issues I hope to work on in next year:

- Membership: Now at 530; if we get to 600 we get another session on the Program. More visibility and more opportunity to present research. Please ask others to join the Section. 620 would be a really good number.
- 530 current members, 31% students, about in the middle of the range among other ASA sections. Would like to work on getting sense of who has left the Section, ask them to rejoin. Also survey current members for input, to get their input. Would like to have any volunteers to work on membership.

Look forward to next year's session. Let me know if you would like to be involved in any of this.

Motion to adjourn at 2:07 p.m. Approved unanimously.

SUBMITTED BY RICHARD L. WOOD, Secretary/Treasurer

## A Message from the New Editor of *Sociology of Religion*

DAVID YAMANE, Wake Forest University

On September 1, 2005, I began receiving submissions as the incoming editor of *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*. In this message, I would like to share some ideas I have for the journal and solicit your involvement.

*SoR* is a journal with a distinguished history and exciting future. Like most editors, my goal is to build on the former while looking to the latter.

Building on the distinguished history of the journal means living up to the high standard set by previous editors. *SoR* has published work by renowned scholars from Ammerman to Wuthnow. Bellah, Luhmann, Parsons, and Sorokin all published in *SoR*. More recently, the journal published an article by Rhys Williams that won the ASA Religion Section Distinguished Article Award. The journal has also been a valuable outlet for scholars just getting started in their careers. This is true of Andrew Greeley and James Davison Hunter and Mary Jo Neitz and on and on.

A big part of looking to the future is embodied in the journal's new web site: [www.sorjournal.org](http://www.sorjournal.org). As scholars become more and more networked electronically, we increasingly expect to get much of the information we need to do our work on-line. My hope is that you will get everything you need to participate in the life of *SoR*—particularly the new “Notice to Contributors”—on the web.

Looking to the future also means being open to work that is on the cutting edge of the field regardless of its substantive focus, theoretical orientation, or methodological approach. It means being open to work by people or on topics or from perspectives with which I am unfamiliar. Of course, the backbone of *SoR* will continue to be theoretically-driven, empirically-grounded research reports. But I also encourage—and solicit—people to submit articles that go beyond the standard research report. To invoke the well-worn cliché, I'm looking also for people who “think outside the box.”

On this last point, I would like to share two particular ideas I have for essays I would like to publish. The first goes under the heading “The Craft of Research.” These are essays offering critical reflections on the research act—e.g., tales from the field or lab—designed to increase reflexivity and sophistication in our empirical work as sociologists of religion. The second goes under the heading “Improving the State-of-the-Art.” These essays are surveys of and interventions into substantive areas or theoretical debates intended to push the field ahead. These are pieces that may later become touchstones for anyone working in a particular field or on a particular problem.

I insist that authors be thoughtful and meticulous in crafting the articles they send to *SoR*, of course. But I also encourage authors to be creative and bold. To be provocative. After all, has there been any more influential

article in the sociology of religion in the past 20 years than Steve Warner's “New Paradigm” essay? A standard research report it was not, but as an intervention and programmatic statement, it was brilliant. It is already a landmark for our field. I want to publish the next generation's “New Paradigm” essay.

Like you, I am swamped with reading material. Given this competition, as incoming editor I aspire to produce a journal that compels your attention. So, send me your most compelling work. And if you have an idea for an essay, a symposium, or a special issue, please be in touch with me. I have only about 400 pages a year to work with and I want to make them the most intelligent, memorable, and useful pages possible.

Finally, I am happy to introduce Jerome Baggett of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley as the incoming Book Review Editor.

### Sociology of Religion Submission Guidelines

- ✓ 3 hard copies and 1 electronic copy of manuscript
- ✓ Submission checklist
- ✓ Processing fee (for non-members only)

See full guidelines at [www.sorjournal.org](http://www.sorjournal.org).

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# Call for Papers



## GREAT DIVIDES: TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES



101st Annual Meeting | August 11-14, 2006  
Montréal, Quebec, Canada | Palais des congrès de Montréal

*Paper submissions for the 2006 American Sociological Association Annual Meeting will occur in early January. The Sociology of Religion Section will sponsor four or possibly five paper sessions in addition to research roundtables. Meeting details and on-line submission procedures are forthcoming on the ASA website at [www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org).*

## XVI ISA World Congress of Sociology

Durban, South Africa, 23-29 July 2006

*The Quality of Social Existence in a Globalising World.*



### Research Committee on Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change (RC48), Session 14: Emotions and Revolution

The purpose of this session is to explore the stated lines of inquiry in order to add to our understanding of the role of emotions in revolution. It is a venue for scholars of revolution to professionally showcase their cases in new ways. Submissions are sought that expressly seek to come to terms with the emotional intelligence / logic behind insurgent struggles. Interdisciplinary approaches are welcome. Send submissions to Jean-Pierre Reed at [jpreed@memphis.edu](mailto:jpreed@memphis.edu). The deadline for paper abstracts is October 31. For more information on the World Congress, see [www.ucm.es/info/isa/congress2006/rc/rc48\\_durban.htm](http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/congress2006/rc/rc48_durban.htm).



### 2006 Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting, August 10-12, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Papers are invited on a broad range of issues in the sociological study of religion relating to the theme "Intersections: History Meets the Sociology of Religion... Again." The program seeks to include papers that address substantive, theoretical, normative, and methodological issues in the sociology of religion. Session proposals are due by January 15, 2006. Paper abstracts are due by February 15, 2006. Please email submissions to ASR Program Chair Peter Kivisto at [ASR2006@augustana.edu](mailto:ASR2006@augustana.edu). For more information, see [www.sociologyofreligion.com](http://www.sociologyofreligion.com).



## Other Initiatives and Opportunities

### Email List to Advance Public Sociology

The "institute" email list is being launched to help students and faculty build public sociology across the United States in small and large ways (e.g., creating departmental public sociology committees; linking with artists, film-makers and activists; reforming graduate training, tenure and promotion; working with publics – local to global – to tackle targeted social problems). Everyone – students and faculty, sociologists and others, in the U.S. or elsewhere – is welcome. To join, email Paul Lachelier at [paul@paullachelier.com](mailto:paul@paullachelier.com).

### New Website for New Religion Journal

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* has a new, more attractive, and free website at [www.religjournal.com](http://www.religjournal.com). The electronic journal founded January 1, 2005 now has ten major articles available, with many more to come. Anyone who registers can freely download all articles. In addition, there is no fee to submit an article and IJRR pays \$1,000 for each article it publishes.

## Dissertations in the Pipe (And Just Out)

**D. Michael Lindsay**, "A Vision for the Center: Elite Refashioning of American Evangelicalism," Department of Sociology, Princeton University.

Evangelicalism is a central part of the American religious landscape, and it has changed over the last thirty years. Through semi-structured interviews with over 350 elite informants as well as archival and ethnographic research, I demonstrate the mechanisms through which evangelicalism has sought to rise in prominence and prestige in recent decades and explore four arenas in which informants have sought to play larger roles in centers of elite cultural production and influence. These arenas of influence include politics and government; business and corporate life; arts, entertainment, and the media; and higher education. Informants for the study include two former Presidents of the United States; over two dozen Cabinet secretaries and senior White House staffers; nearly 100 presidents, CEOs, or senior executives at large firms (both public and private); a dozen accomplished Hollywood professionals; over 10 leaders from the world of professional athletics, and a handful of leaders from the artistic and philanthropic arenas, among others. This research seeks to address important issues surrounding social stratification, culture, and religion by attending to the intersection of all three domains in the lives of contemporary elites.

**Travis Vande Berg**, "ISKCON and Indians: Religion and Identity in North American Hinduism," Department of Sociology, Loyola University Chicago, August 2005.

This research examines the relationship between Indian immigration and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Specifically, it is concerned with answering two primary questions: 1) How has ISKCON as a religious organization and movement impacted Indian immigrants and their lives in the United States and Canada? and 2) How has Indian immigration impacted the formal organization and the religious movement/theological goals of ISKCON? In order to answer these questions, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews at the ISKCON temples in Chicago and Toronto. I argue that ISKCON's creation of an idealized Vedic culture within its temples attracts Indian immigrants who then use the temples for a variety of religious and cultural purposes that are frequently at odds with those of ISKCON devotees and lead to conflict. However, through their exposure to and involvement in ISKCON, some Indians become members of ISKCON as either Life Members or as formally initiated devotees of the movement. This process results in three different types of Indian immigrants at the temples and raises questions about the future direction of ISKCON as a religious organization and movement.

## Member News and Notes

*Member News and Notes feature assorted information about section members, including hirings and promotions, new books, articles published outside major sociological or sociology of religion journals, and any other notable achievements.*

**Sally Gallagher**, Oregon State University, was promoted to full professor in the Department of Sociology.

**Harriet Hartman**, Rowan University, became President of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ). For more information on the association, visit the website at [www.assj.org](http://www.assj.org), or contact Hartman directly at [hartman@rowan.edu](mailto:hartman@rowan.edu).

**Kathleen Jenkins**, formerly of Clark University, has accepted an assistant professorship in the sociology department at the College of William and Mary. Rutgers University Press is publishing her first book, *Awesome Families: The Promise of Healing Relationships in the International Churches Of Christ*, which will be available November 2005.

**Paul Lichterman**, University of Southern California, *Elusive Togetherness: Church Groups Trying to Bridge America's Divisions* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

**Diana G. Tumminia**, California State University at Sacramento, published *When Prophecy Never Fails: Myth and Reality in a Flying-Saucer Group* (Oxford University Press, 2005). For more information, see [www.csus.edu/indiv/t/tumminia/prophecybook.htm](http://www.csus.edu/indiv/t/tumminia/prophecybook.htm).

**David Yamane**, Wake Forest University, *Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands and Political Realities* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

## What is your news?



## Share it here.

## Employment Announcements

**Utah State University.** The Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Sociology, starting August 2006. We seek to fill this position with a candidate specializing in Social Change and Development. Preferred secondary areas of specialization include one or more of: Developing Societies, Religion, and/or Science. Ability to connect to existing departmental strengths is desirable. Teaching responsibilities will include undergraduate and graduate courses in these areas of specialization; additional ability to contribute to departmental instruction in the areas of introductory sociology, social theory, the sociology of religion, and/or race-class-gender is preferred. Candidates should be able to demonstrate significant accomplishments and/or clear potential for scholarly productivity, extramural research funding, and excellence in teaching. The PhD is required prior to appointment; applications from exceptional candidates who are very near to degree completion will be considered. Strong oral and written communication skills are required. Candidates must send a letter of application describing teaching and research capabilities and interests, a current vita, graduate transcripts, three letters of reference, summaries of teaching evaluations, and examples of written work to: Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith, Chair, Social Change and Development Search Committee, Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology, 0730 Old Main Hill, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-0730. Screening of applicants will begin October 14, 2005 and continue until the position is filled.

**Wellesley College.** The Department of Sociology invites applications for a full-time, tenure track, Assistant Professor position beginning Fall 2006. Successful candidates will have a Ph.D. in sociology along with teaching experience and a publication record. Founded in 1875, Wellesley College has been a leader in liberal arts and the education of women for more than 125 years. The College's 500-acre campus near Boston is home to 2,300 undergraduate students. The teaching load (four courses per year) is comparable to many universities, and faculty are expected to maintain an active research program. The position is open, but we especially encourage applications from candidates whose teaching and research interests include popular culture and media. We seek applicants who are interested in working in a cooperative and collaborative teaching environment and who are strongly committed to liberal arts education and excellence in scholarship. To apply, send a cover letter indicating teaching and research interests, a curriculum vitae, any course syllabi (or proposed courses) and three letters of reference to: Chair, Search Committee, Department of Sociology, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02481. Applications are due no later than November 1, 2005. Wellesley College is an EO/AA educational institution and employer. The College is committed to increasing the diversity of the college community and the curriculum. Candidates who believe they will contribute to that goal are encouraged to apply.

## From the Editor

A new longer, more colorful newsletter greets you. A vote of members at the 2005 business meeting (see Minutes, page 10) approved the transition from a printed newsletter mailed to section members to an electronic newsletter. The fall 2005 edition marks the transition.

Several key benefits come with the new newsletter format. Foremost is cost. Printing and postage for the newsletter cost our section approximately \$1500 a year. This was the single largest section expense, consuming half our annual budget. The electronic newsletter frees resources for other section activities, such as receptions at ASA annual meetings.

By eliminating production costs, the electronic format also brings more flexibility for newsletter length and design. My intent is to keep each issue to 12 to 15 pages. While I can now accommodate articles of up to 5000 words, articles included will continue to be topical essays, narratives, and informative items in keeping with the networking function of the newsletter. Responses to previous articles are always welcome. In addition, digital pictures and other graphic imagery are now eligible for submission as well.

The one aspect of this change that does concern me is the potential loss of readers. A printed newsletter may get at least a cursory overview when received in the mail. Will readers follow the web link to read the on-line version of the newsletter? I certainly hope so. There will be little social networking possible through this medium if readership drops.

Toward this end, I invite your feedback. Please let me know how we can more effectively promote and present our news. The Sociology of Religion Section possesses great people and great research. I look forward to championing both to a wider audience.

KEVIN D. DOUGHERTY, Baylor University

Submission Deadlines:

October 1 for Fall Newsletter

February 1 for Winter Newsletter

June 1 for Spring Newsletter