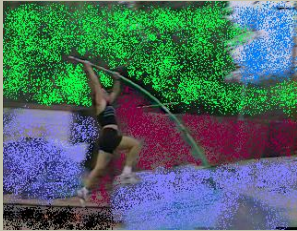


Summer 2007

# ASA-SKAT



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## Science, Knowledge, and Technology From the Section Chair

Jennifer Croissant  
Women's Studies  
University of Arizona

This is the last newsletter for me as Chair of the Science, Knowledge, and Technology section, as Kelly Moore will take over as section Chair at the conclusion of the meetings in NYC. Daniel Kleinman will take over for Kelly as Chair-Elect, and in that position Daniel will serve as Program Chair for the Section, so suggestions you have for panels and events for future meetings should go to Daniel. The conclusion of the meetings also sees the end of the terms of Susan Silbey and Christopher Henke as Section Council members. Each has done a great job contributing to awards committees and the general running of the section, and please make a point of thanking them in person should you run into them in New York. Taking their places on Council are Patrick Carroll and Jackie Orr, and we look forward to their contributions and insights into advancing the SKAT section.

This newsletter will also be the last for Newsletter Editor Todd Paddock, who has done a heroic job of managing this for the section. I really appreciate his diligence and hard work in producing our newsletter. We now need a new editor, and would like to hear any suggestions for the newsletter, as a changeover like this is as good an opportunity as any to reinvent the section's communications. We think we would like to connect it in a more timely fashion to the Section's listserves and discussion boards, as well as the general Section website, but input from the membership as to what would be an effective and interesting resource is most welcome.

At the conclusion of my term I would also like to thank Vivian Varela of Taft Community College, [varela@taftcollege.edu](mailto:varela@taftcollege.edu) for taking over the Section website, and to Lynette Osborn who is on the books as moderator for the topic discussion forum on the ASA website. The forum is available for discussion and if anyone has suggestions for events (an on-line author response session, perhaps) or discussion topics, the medium is available for section member use.

I haven't necessarily finished everything I had hoped for the section, but during my next two years as immediate Past Chair I do hope to bring to fruition some ideas about increasing the amount of our student award and developing the Merton Award more fully. The chairs and members for those two committees have perhaps the largest and most complex tasks for the

Section, and they have done their jobs admirably, as have section members who have nominated works for review and of course written those excellent works and made the committees' tasks so challenging every year.

I will not quite miss being Section Chair, but I am more than happy to turn the reins over to Kelly Moore, under whose leadership and energy I am sure the ASA Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology will continue to thrive. I can't wait to see what she has in store for us!

Please make a point of attending our business meeting and reception. The business meeting will take place at 5:30pm at the Sheraton on Saturday, and the reception, co-convened with the Section on Environment and Technology, immediately follows starting at 6:30pm at the same location.

See you at the meetings.

## **SKAT News**

### **Section Awards Endowment Drive**

In order to increase the amount of the Hacker-Mullins Student Award, and to enable the section to remunerate the winners of the Merton Book award for travel to the annual meetings to receive their awards, the SKAT section is seeking donations to a dedicated account for section prizes and awards.

If every section member gave just \$25, we would have enough to begin these initiatives. No gift is too small (or too large). In addition, donations are tax deductible. Your gift will help our section:

- Increase the visibility and prestige of SKAT Section Awards.
- Help SKAT take the lead in financing section activities.
- Decrease our dependence on ASA allocations and buffer the Section from unforeseen costs (like extortionary catering costs for receptions at the annual meetings).
- Reward our student award winners with a more meaningful financial prize.
- Reward the Merton award winner with travel support for presenting their work at the meetings.

Despite our best efforts, we could not tie this fund raising plan to the annual renewal process. Please send a **CHECK made out to "ASA-SKAT"** with a notation of **"SKAT Section Award Account"** to:

Kelly Joyce, SKAT Secretary-Treasurer  
Sociology, 233 Morton Hall  
College of William and Mary  
Box 8795  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Kelly will record your donation for Section records and then forward the check to the ASA for deposit. Thank you for considering support of the section in this way.

- Jennifer Croissant (Past Chair)
- Kelly Moore (Chair)
- Kelly Joyce (Secretary-Treasurer)



## New Officers

Congratulations to our newly elected council members, who will begin three-year terms immediately following the ASA meetings:

- Chair-Elect: Daniel Lee Kleinman, University of Wisconsin
- Council: Patrick Carroll, Syracuse University
- Council: Jackie Orr, Syracuse University

Many thanks for their willingness to serve. We encourage those who are interested in running for office in the future to contact Andrew Lakoff ([alakoff@ucsd.edu](mailto:alakoff@ucsd.edu)), the SKAT nominations chair.

## SKAT Listserve

Don't forget that SKAT has a listserv. To drop in and take part in the discussion, go to [http://members.asanet.org/Forums/view\\_forum.php?id=27](http://members.asanet.org/Forums/view_forum.php?id=27) or <http://members.asanet.org/Forums/> and scroll down to Science, Knowledge, and Technology (this way you can view the many other ASA section forums).

## ASA SKAT Sessions

SKAT Day at the ASA is Saturday, August 11, with one session on Sunday, August 12. We have a terrific set of panels scheduled.

### Business Meeting

Saturday, August 12, 5:30-6:10pm  
Building: Sheraton

### Reception (with Section on Environment and Technology)

Saturday, 6:30-8pm  
Building: Sheraton

### 1) Section Session: Science, Technology, and Environments

Saturday, 8:30-10:10am  
Building: Sheraton

Organizers: Patrick Eamon Carroll (UC-Davis) and Thomas D. Beamish (UC-Davis)  
Presider: Kelly Moore (University of Cincinnati)

- Critical Materialism in Contemporary Environmental Sociology: A Comparative Analysis. Christopher S. Oliver (Michigan State University).
- Envisioning Environment as Ecosystem: Cybernetics, Epistemology, and Ontology in Early Systems Ecology. Lisa Asplen (University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana).
- From 3-D Space to Third Place: Building Sociable Public Places in Virtual Environments. Robert John Moore (Palo Alto Research Center), E. Cabell Hankinson Gathman (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Nicolas Ducheneaut (Palo Alto Research Center).
- Taylorist Talk and Bossy Built Environments. Rachael Elizabeth Barlow (Indiana University).

### Description:

Sociologists interested in science, technology, and environment discuss “the environment” in a range of ways: natural, material, built, virtual, as place, and so on. This session aims to articulate different usages of

“the environment” and related terms, and advance discussion on what these terms mean, particularly in relation to questions about materiality.

## **2) Section Session: The Social Production of Knowledge Gaps**

Saturday, August 11, 10am-12:10pm

Building: Sheraton

Session Organizer: Scott Frickel (Tulane University)

Presenter: Scott Frickel (Tulane University)

- On the Bureaucratic Production of Knowledge Gaps: Organizing Ignorance in Post-Katrina New Orleans. Scott Frickel (Tulane University).
- Ignorance and the Unexpected: Contours of a Sociology of Surprises. Matthias Gross (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, UFZ).
- Undone Science, Knowledge Gaps, and Counter-Expertise: An Alternative Approach to the Public Understanding of Science. David J. Hess (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute).
- Discussant: Andrew Lakoff (UC San Diego).

Abstract:

Knowledge gaps are an inherent feature of knowledge systems, but their distribution is not random. This panel explores the ways in which the absence of knowledge is socially and systematically produced as both intended and unintended outcomes of institutionalization processes in the sciences and related domains.

## **3) Authors-Meet-Critics: 2006 Robert K. Merton Book Award Co-Winners**

Saturday, August 11, 2:30-4:10pm

Building: Sheraton

Session Organizer: Kelly Moore (University of Cincinnati)

Presenter: Kelly Moore (University of Cincinnati)

Co-Winners:

- Scott Frickel (Tulane University)  
*Chemical Consequences: Environmental Mutagens, Scientist Activism, and the Rise of Genetic Toxicology* (Rutgers University Press, 2004)
- Joseph Masco (University of Chicago)  
*The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton University Press, 2006)

Panelists

- Thomas F. Gieryn (Indiana University)
- Patrick Eamon Carroll (University of California-Davis)
- Beth Schaefer Caniglia (Oklahoma State University)
- Ed Hackett (Arizona State University)

#### **4) Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology Roundtable Session.**

Saturday, August 11, 4:30-5:30pm

Building: Sheraton New York.

Organizer: Hannah Grol-Prokopczyk (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

##### **Table 01. Disciplines and Interdisciplinarity.**

- A Networks and Organizations Perspective on (Inter)disciplinarity: A Meta-Analysis of Science and Technology Studies. Kyle Siler (Cornell University).
- The Cultural Construction of Interdisciplinarity: Doctoral Student Socialization in an Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Program. Karri Holley (University of Alabama).
- Statistics as Expert Knowledge: The Development of Professional Statisticians and Their Work in Modern Japan. Jennifer A. Winther (UCLA).
- The Structure of the Coauthorship Network in Business and Management. Pietro Panzarasa (Queen Mary, University of London), Tore Opsahl (Queen Mary, University of London).

Presider: Kyle Siler (Cornell University)

##### **Table 02: Small-Scale Sciences, Big Ethical Issues: Cloning, Stem Cells, and Nanotechnology.**

- Public Fiction as Knowledge Production: The Case of the Raelians' Cloning Claims. Mary C. Ingram-Waters (University of California, Santa Barbara).
- The Reproductive Logics of Cloning: Transforming Time, Space, and Bodies in the Biopolitical Apparatuses of Endangered Species Conservation. Carrie E. Friese (Univ of California-San Francisco).
- Ethical Debates on Scientific Practice: Predictors of Policies on Stem Cell Research. Connie L. McNeely (George Mason University), Sorina O. Vlaicu (George Mason University).
- Constructing Risk: Media Coverage of Nanotechnology. Scott T. Fitzgerald (Univ. North Carolina-Charlotte).

Presider: Mary C. Ingram-Waters (University of California, Santa Barbara)

##### **Table 03: Bodies, Beings, and the Social Order.**

- Biopolitics of Family Planning: Disciplinary Development in South Korea in the 1960-80s. Myung Ji Yang (Brown University).
- Evolutionary Biology, Symbiogenesis and Sociology's New Imagination. Myra Jean Hird (Queen's University).
- Investing in Catastrophe: Managing Mass Mental Illness. Craig Willse (The Graduate Center, CUNY).

Presider: Myung Ji Yang (Brown University)

##### **Table 04: Funding and Technology in University and Research Settings.**

- Transforming Genes and University Research: Agricultural Biotechnology, University-Industry Research Collaborations, and Professional Science Values. Leland Luther Glenna (Pennsylvania State University), Rick Welsh (Clarkson University), William B. Lacy (University of California, Davis), Dina Biscotti (University of California, Davis).
- Does Industry Support Bias Research? Funding Source and Outcome in Cardiovascular Device Trials. Susan Chimonas (Columbia University), Nancy Y. Chen (Columbia University), Eric Bassett-Novoa (Columbia University), Patrick J. Moynihan (Fordham University), David J Rothman (Columbia University).
- Property, Presence, and Practice: Preliminary Research on IT and Instruction in Higher Education Settings. Jennifer L. Croissant (University of Arizona).

- Institutionalization of Technology Transfer in Chinese Universities. Enying Zheng (University of Illinois at Chicago), Hongxing Yang (University of Chicago).
- Transfer Troubles: Outsourcing Information Technology in Higher Education. Nicholas James Rowland (Indiana University).

Presider: Leland Luther Glenna (Pennsylvania State University)

**Table 05: Psychology, Inequality, and Economics.**

- Toward A Psycho-Sociology of Science and Education. John McCamy Wilkes (Worcester Polytechnic Institute).
- Pure and Natural Markets: Designing Incentives for Investment in the Restructured Electricity Industry. Daniel Breslau (Virginia Tech).
- ‘Services’ in industry statistics: Notes historical and social. Marc J. Ventresca (University of Oxford), Stephen Rosenberg (University of Chicago).
- The Making of Difference: Psychology and Inequality from a Micro Perspective. Merav Sadi-Nakar (University California, Los Angeles).

Presider: John McCamy Wilkes (Worcester Polytechnic Institute)

**5) Regular Session: Sociology of Science**

Sunday, August 12, 10:30-12:30pm

Session Organizer: Andrew Lakoff (UC-San Diego)

Presider: Andrew Lakoff (UC-San Diego)

- Weathering the Seas: Commercial Fisherman’s Interaction with Weather and Weather Information Phaedra Daipha (University of Chicago)
- The Normal and the Pathological at a Brain Imaging Lab: The Construction of a Clinical Population Through Medical Research. Emine Onculer (Columbia University)
- Scientific Description to Moral Prescription: The Devalorization of Eugenics in the Postwar Years. Nancy Davenport (Columbia University)
- Interdisciplinarity as Scientific Capital Exchange: The Case of Behavior Genetics Aaron L. Panofsky (UC-Berkeley)

**New Publications**

For additional publications, see “Announcements” under

<http://www.4sonline.org/profession/profession.htm>

Parthasarathy, Shobita. 2007. *Building Genetic Medicine: Breast Cancer, Technology, and the Comparative Politics of Health Care*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stein, Josephine Anne and Allam Ahmed. 2007. “The European Union as a Model of International Co-Operation in Science, Technology, and Sustainable Development.” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. See <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/bjpi/0/0>

## Book Review

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*Surveillance and Security: Technological Politics in Everyday Life*. Ed. Torin Monahan. New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-95396-6

In *Surveillance and Security: Technological Politics in Everyday Life*, Torin Monahan has gathered together a slate of social scientists for the purpose of exploring how surveillance technologies shape our everyday lives. This edited volume is divided into two sections: in the first, “Neoliberal States,” authors explore surveillance technologies employed in the service of neoliberal policies (for example, covert diagnostic screening of pregnant women for illegal drugs, electronically tagging surgical patients to increase hospital efficiency); in the second section, “Mobilities and Insecurities,” authors discuss surveillance technologies associated with the movement of bodies, via mass transportation systems, through airports, and across borders.

Monahan’s overarching goal with this edited volume is to challenge the taken-for-granted assumption that surveillance is necessary for security and as such, trade-offs for surveillance pit civil liberties against security management. This is such an engrained notion, especially in contemporary society: that we “pay” for security by necessarily giving up our civil liberties. Even as a sociologist, I found myself coming back to this dichotomy instead of questioning it on its foundational claims, as Monahan suggests. I enjoyed reading *Surveillance and Security* immensely. In fact, I had a hard time putting it down once I began reading it. In each chapter, the authors push past the obvious issues surrounding security vs. civil liberties and force readers to engage in how the technologies are used to influence processes of social reproduction.

As a new mother, I freely admit that I find the idea of surveillance technologies for my infant almost irresistible: could I ensure that childcare workers provide adequate care by using some kind of camera? Could I keep my increasingly mobile baby away from bodies of water or other unsafe environments with a monitoring bracelet? While that may not sound so terrible, given the vulnerabilities of curious toddlers, what about implantable tracking devices to keep our teenagers “safe”? Would that be going too far? In “The state goes home: local hypervigilance of children and the global retreat from social reproduction,” Cindi Katz explores the lure of these technologies that claim to keep our children safe and the social issues that such technologies obscure. Let’s return to the issue of the “nanny-cam”: Katz explains that the makers of these kinds of monitoring devices promise parents control over their little ones’ day-to-day care by revealing caregivers’ minute-by-minute actions. By offering parents the illusion of control through the ability to monitor their children from afar, Katz argues that we lose sight of the larger scale social forces at play. These include the willingness of middle-class women to scrutinize the actions of the lower-class women caring for their children and the demands that working parents place on largely underpaid, highly exploitable domestic workers as well as the tremendous profit potential for firms marketing these devices.

Throughout the text, Monahan and individual authors remind us again and again that surveillance technologies have done little to earn their reputation for making the world safer, more efficient, more equitable, or more of whatever else the technologies’ manufacturers would like us to believe. Moreover,



Monahan points out that there have been few studies even solicited to measure the efficacy of surveillance technologies by those who would pay hundreds, thousands, millions, even billions of dollars for them. In other words, that surveillance technologies work is a taken-for-granted notion. These days, the unwavering faith in surveillance technologies is wrapped up in a culture of fear so that questioning the technologies is itself suspect. If you think this is overstated, try one or more of the following: ask your coworkers if virtual cameras along the US-Mexico border will keep out illegal immigrants; balk at your employer's next mandatory drug test; tell your students that your low ratemyprofessor.com profile doesn't really mean anything negative about your teaching; or suggest that your baby's combination sock/shoe couldn't possibly be dangerous to an airport security agent when she insists that they be removed.

Monahan's edited volume is not just a sociological critique of surveillance technologies. In each case study, authors impart with readers a set of strategies for dealing with surveillance technologies, even the ones that are so ubiquitous that we forget they're there (like how shopping club cards give you discounts but also catalog every single item you buy). One, readers can better identify surveillance technologies for what they are (from drug tests to google searches); two, readers can dismantle the arbitrary claim that surveillance is necessary for the greater good; three, readers can see the social relations driving the market for surveillance technologies; and four, readers can demand that surveillance technologies be designed with an understanding of these social relations.

This book would be appropriate for a number of courses, from science and society ones to more general sociological curricula. The cases studies are very well-written and engaging and would certainly hold appeal for both undergraduates and graduates. In short, this volume is such an important and timely set of conversations that I think it should be left out on coffee tables and in doctor's offices or wherever people just happen to pick up things to read.

**Book reviewers needed!**

Please send an email to Mary Ingram-Waters at [mci0@uemail.ucsb.edu](mailto:mci0@uemail.ucsb.edu) to be put in the pool of potential reviewers. Please include your name, contact info, and substantive areas that you'd prefer to review in.

**Books to be reviewed?**

Would you like to see your book reviewed here? Do you have a suggestion? Then please email Mary Ingram-Waters at [mci0@uemail.ucsb.edu](mailto:mci0@uemail.ucsb.edu)

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## Spotlight On a Network

### The Postgraduate Forum on Genetics and Society (PFGS)

[www.pfgs.org](http://www.pfgs.org)

By Conor Douglas.

Chair of the PFGS

Research Fellow and PhD Student at the Science and Technology Studies Unit, University of York (UK)

If you are a PhD student conducting research into how the construction of non-human genetic material such as cattle breeding lines in Finland impacts notions of nationhood, identity, law and regulation, for instance, then your academic network could potentially be limited. Even more so if you are based in a geographical region in which you find yourself academically isolated, or in an environment that doesn't provide conference or seminar events which engage with your area of interest or theoretical approach.


The Postgraduate Forum on Genetics and Society (or PFGS) is a multidisciplinary network of new researchers working in and around areas of genetics and society. Broadly, our interest lie in exploring the co-constructivist dynamics by which society shapes genetic practices, products, and policies, and how society too is influenced by novel technoscientific developments.

One of the motivations people like Richard Tutton (now at the University of Nottingham) and Adam Hedgecoe (now at the University of Sussex) had in initiating the PFGS, back in 1998, was to link-up postgraduate researchers working in similar areas. The result has been almost ten years of productive collaboration, networking, learning, training, and growth.

The first meetings of the PFGS were based in the UK, and were largely an opportunity for small numbers of PhD researchers to come together, present their work, and exchange ideas. Since then a lot has changed, not only within the field of genetics in society, but also with regards to the organization of the PFGS itself, and the function it serves its members. The network has continued to meet (at least) annually at the organization's major event: the PFGS colloquium that now runs over 3 days and plays host to around 40 postgrads. Recently, however, the scope and scale of PFGS activities and members has blossomed. We now have over a hundred members from over 15 different countries including Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Romania, Tasmania, India, as well as Canada and the United States. On top of holding our annual colloquium we now have an active, online, discussion forum where members and visitors can exchange information, debate current issues, and receive announcements about jobs and events. We also hold regional meetings around the UK, and abroad. In addition to spotlighting work being carried out in the local area, these can incorporate skills development workshops, which help our members build their research capacity and prepare them for conducting future research within our specific substantive area. This year's workshops included a one-day session on communicating with scientists, and practical sessions on doing ethnography in laboratory settings.

Several features of the PFGS make it a unique organization within the postgraduate community:

- Its 'fluid' nature: meaning that it is run by PhD students for PhD students, thus, as current contributors finish their PhDs, the PFGS takes on a new committee and members annually;
- While our core research focus is specific and the study of genetics and society has, and continues to be, a



central element of the PFGS, we also recognize that genetics as a discipline is itself changing, and also changing other disciplines. Consequently we have recently widened our focus to include enquiries into the life-sciences and society more broadly, while at the same time maintaining a particular gaze on genetics and the disciplines it touches.

- Another unique feature of the PFGS is the multidisciplinary background of our members. The activities that we run as a network are generally based in sociology but range across biology, law, philosophy, science and technology studies, and theatre.

The PFGS is committed to being an open and voluntary organization, and continues to dedicate itself to providing a collegial atmosphere for PhD researchers, which takes seriously the need to critically investigate and understand the relationships between genetics and life sciences and society.

The next PFGS colloquium will be held at the University of Durham from August 29th to September 1st and will be centered on the theme of ‘Public Engagement?’. To find out more about the PFGS and the colloquium simply visit our website at [www.pfgs.org](http://www.pfgs.org). Membership is free, easy, open all, and rewarding. We also publish a newsletter which can be viewed and/or downloaded from the website. You can find a review of our last colloquium, and some of the papers presented there in the journal *Genomics, Society and Policy* (available online at: [www.gspjournal.com](http://www.gspjournal.com)).

## Perspective

# The Need and Relevance of Astrosociology as a Subdiscipline

Jim Pass, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction: What is Astrosociology?

I founded astrosociology due to my desire to link two of my most strongly held interests: space exploration and sociology. Historically, these two matters have remained separate despite the fact that space exploration is impossible without social interaction. I knew in graduate school that I wanted to link these two interests, but at that time I could not easily reconcile the two in my own mind. That is, what would the “sociology of outer space” look like? I set the project aside but knew that at some point I knew that I would get back to the issue.

More than ten years passed after my graduation from the University of Southern California with a doctorate degree in sociology. Through 2002, I did not even know what to call this imagined field. Then one morning in December 2002, I came across an article by Allen Tough called *Positive Consequences of SETI Before Detection*<sup>2</sup> in which he mentioned the need for a new field called *socio-astronomy* or *astrosociology*. Seeing the term *astrosociology* on the web page was an epiphanic moment for me. Immediately, I purchased the *Astrosociology.com* domain and began the seven-month-long struggle to define this new subfield. Despite my enthusiasm, the definition proved difficult to construct.

Slowly, I finally came to a simple realization that I had known intuitively all along: space activities have an impact on human societies! The relationship is reciprocal. Societies shape the characteristics of their space programs just as social interactions related to space produce social change in society on a general basis. I finally defined astrosociology as the scientific study of *astrosocial phenomena* (i.e., the social and cultural patterns related to outer space). A similar term became popular for *astrobiology*, thus astrosociology makes sense to me.

Since then, scholars from other social sciences, especially social psychology and psychology, have been joining the growing astrosociological community. Astrosociology is developing both a sociological subfield and a multidisciplinary social science field. The latter aspect of its development is due mostly to the exposure of astrosociology to members of the space community at conferences in the past three years.

Another aspect of astrosociology worth mentioning is the division between the theoretical and practical facets of the subfield. Like sociology itself, *applied astrosociology* utilizes knowledge gained from the theoretical side to meet practical ends. For the most part, this involves collaborating with space scientists, engineers, architects, and other members of the space community. They are beginning to recognize that they can benefit from social-scientific insights, theory, and research findings. However, applied astrosociology can also involve addressing social problems with space assets, including the utilization of knowledge from the space community.

### The Need for Astrosociology

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<sup>1</sup> I welcome your comments! Send them to [jpass](mailto:jpass@mydomain.com) at my site's domain.

<sup>2</sup> This article by Allen Tough was first uploaded to as a web page but was subsequently published in the journal *Acta Astronautica*, 42(10-12): 745-748, under the same title.

A few of the small number of open critics of astrosociology (fewer than ten) argue that issues related to outer space can be handled by the “sociology of organizations” subfield or the “science and technology” subfield. In practice, however, these two subfields traditionally possess a strong terrestrial (i.e., earthbound) bias, as SKAT members know. Research regarding scientific and technological issues in society rarely involves *both* terrestrial *and* extraterrestrial subjects. They do not provide the focus necessary to place enough attention on astrosocial phenomena; otherwise, astrosocial phenomena would be a mainstream subfield and attract the substantial level of funding it rightly deserves. It is for this reason that I felt it necessary to take the unusual step of *declaring the existence of astrosociology*, and devoting a great deal of my personal time and effort to develop it. The subdisciplines focusing on science and technology, and organizations, are too diverse to consistently incorporate the topics falling under the purview of astrosociology, but the sociologists in the two subfields should work with astrosociologists.

Sociology deals with social space and other forms, but not *outer* space. The indifference toward outer space issues that exists today is most likely based on our discipline’s historical avoidance of it. Historical inertia, based on an emphasis on traditional subfields and the lack of funding available to study astrosocial phenomena, explains this situation better than any arguments questioning the legitimacy of astrosociology. Since the founding of sociology, very few sociologists have conducted research regarding astrosociological issues. When American sociologists specializing in subfields such as organizations and science and technology conduct research about a topic that involves *outer* space, they typically do so with a focus on corporate culture or something other than space and its relationship to society. This is borne out by the dearth of an identifiable interest group of space researchers within our discipline. Those interested in outer space normally conduct their research in isolation, often fearful that their “marginal” interest will stifle their careers, or at least their opportunities for advancement.

Moreover, no body of sociological knowledge has been established, even as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the space age this year. What astrosociology allows for is the construction of this body of knowledge and a related coherent literature. The need for astrosociology exists due to both the ongoing inattention toward outer space issues as they relate to societies *and* the fact that ignoring them does not make them sociologically irrelevant. Avoidance does not make them go away. I believe it is time that our discipline addressed its failure to perceive the big white elephant sitting in its living room. Mainstream sociology would benefit greatly as human societies will undergo social change that involves an ever greater impact by various types of astrosocial phenomena.

### **Overcoming the “Indifference Factor”**

The sociological discipline has historically viewed outer space as an *illegitimate* domain for theorizing and conducting research. For the most uninformed sociologists, the most common reaction is aversion to the very prospect of considering a relationship between outer space and society. SETI (the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) faced—and overcame—a similar problem in its early history. Its struggle to portray SETI as a science made it stronger in the long run, just as I am sure astrosociology will prosper in a similar way as it develops.

What I call the “indifference factor” has been a problem in sociology. The average sociologist does not seem to grasp the significance of outer space as it relates to human societies even as national governments, consortiums, corporations, and entrepreneurs begin to spend millions of dollars on space projects. The contemporary expansion of spaceport construction around the world is one good example. Also, corporations dedicated to space, yet outside the traditional aerospace industry, signaling an increase in the privatization of space, will create new industries (e.g., space tourism). Individuals and organizations are

moving forward in our society, even as sociology lags behind. (Fifty years is a rather long cultural lag effect!)

The impact of outer space today, and especially in the future, dictates a strong emphasis by the sociological community. It is long past the point at which sociology must take issues related to outer space seriously. The popular issue in sociology today is a focus on human behavior on a global scale, and space includes that dimension (e.g., partnership of nations building and operating the International Space Station). However, the more remarkable connections will involve human societies that interact on a larger scale: across space between the Earth and settlements (i.e., space societies) and among those space societies as humanity extends itself into our solar system. The time scale for this to occur is secondary to contemporary human behavior, including changes in cultural ideas and material culture (e.g., the increase in spaceports around the world). Astrosocial phenomena exist and they contribute to social change in all dimensions of social life. Why does our discipline ignore these facts? When humanity (and its social systems) expand into space, should not sociology expand along with them? In the past, sociology studied human societies wherever they established themselves. What is so different this time?


### **The Relevance of Astrosociology to Our Discipline**

Nevertheless, the question always arises about how astrosociology is relevant to sociology. Put another way, how is sociology relevant to outer space? What can sociology contribute to the general topic of space exploration, travel, recreation, and exploitation? The list below provides a hint of what our discipline is missing; why astrosociology represents a major missing perspective in sociology. Certainly, no one can seriously argue that space exploration does not involve social interaction, culture, social structures, or social change. The United States government devotes billions of dollars to space and private organizations on the Earth, whether in the aerospace industry and “new space” corporations. The space advocacy community devotes millions of dollars and/or high levels of their members’ personal time. Our society is committed to space in a big way. Why is sociology oblivious to these realities?

Astrosociology possesses a large purview that includes specializations in many areas receiving little traditional attention. They include: (1) astrosocial phenomena and social change; (2) astrobiology and SETI; (3) solving social problems with space assets; (4) the *Overview Effect* (how the view of the Earth from space binds humanity together); (5) space settlements (i.e., *space societies*); (6) long duration spaceflight; (7) planetary defense (from comets and asteroids); (8) space medicine; (9) space policy; (10) space education in the sociology classroom; (11) privatization / commercialization of outer space; (12) development of spacefaring societies; and (13) space advocacy. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does demonstrate the scope of astrosociology (and what sociology historically ignores on a regular basis). Arguably, these issues will become even more significant to humanity and its social systems as the twenty-first century unfolds.

### **Conclusion: Can Future Societies Advance without Outer Space?**

Perhaps the most pertinent question is: can sociology advance without outer space? The foregoing discussion makes the case, I believe, for the need to bring sociology into the space age. This article is not a criticism of our discipline as much as it is a strong encouragement to take a hard, long look at the relationship between space and society as a legitimate (and even important, though neglected) area of theory and research. The establishment of an Astrosociology Working Group in the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)—the leading professional aerospace organization in the United States—demonstrates that members of the space community perceive the benefits of a sociological/social science perspective earlier than most members of the social science community. Social scientists should be



pressuring those in the space community to collaborate on important areas of research rather than space scientists and engineers requesting social scientists to collaborate with them.

The history of social change in any society dictates that progress and expansion help to ensure continued development. Where do societies expand once the terrestrial lands are explored or conquered? What produces pressures for science and technology to advance? How do we solve our social problems if science and technology begin to decline? While astrosociology does not interfere with the development of societies, it should exist when the answers to these types of questions cause human societies to expand into our solar system. The imperative is the same for societies as it has always been: explore and progress *or* turn inward and decline.

Both the historical indifference of sociology and the increasing importance of astrosocial phenomena provide credence for the argument that we must develop astrosociology as a separate subdiscipline. It is true that many early astrosociologists may find their careers challenged and may receive chastisement from their colleagues for participating in a new field that seems to exist on the fringes of traditional sociology. However, it is not a pseudoscience. It is, in fact, a mainstream subject matter; and the rewards of doing pioneering work in astrosociology, especially intrinsically, cannot be matched within the longstanding subfields.

I urge SKAT members, whom I suspect are most sympathetic to my undertaking, and all sociologists interested in theory and research involving outer space and society (i.e., astrosocial phenomena), to consider signing the Astrosociology Section-in-Formation Petition located at *Astrosociology.com* (see link at top of the home page) and becoming involved in this exciting new field. Furthermore, I ask members of the entire sociological community to support astrosociology even if they decline to pursue it themselves. You can read publications and conference papers from me and others that concern astrosociology at the following URL: [http://www.astrosociology.com/vlibrary.html#VL\\_ASRefs](http://www.astrosociology.com/vlibrary.html#VL_ASRefs)

We have made progress in the western regional sociological associations and within the space community. The time is overdue that the same occurs within the sociological community at the national level; that is, within the ASA.

I am proud to call myself the first formally-declared “astrosociologist.” I guess you could say I am passionate about the development of astrosociology... And others are joining us; most notably, interestingly enough, graduate students!

## Employment and Fellowships

For additional employment and fellowships, see “Positions” under <http://www.4sonline.org/profession/profession.htm>

### **Full Professor Position, Sociology of Technology RWTH Aachen University, Germany “The Future Begins With Us.”**

Full Professor (W2) in Sociology  
Faculty of Philosophy  
RWTH Aachen University

We are seeking qualified applicants for teaching and research in the area of sociology with special emphasis in the areas of sociology of technology. The starting date is as soon as possible. The special emphases of the professorship are sociology and sociology of technology. In teaching and research the chair is to represent themes such as acceptance of technology and social conditions and consequences of innovations. Sociology can be studied as a major or minor subject within the Bachelor and Master programme. Furthermore, it can be an integral part of various teaching qualification or diploma programmes as well as of some graduate programmes.

A Ph.D. degree is required; highly desirable are Habilitation (postdoctoral lecturing qualification), an exemplary record of research achievement as an assistant, associate, and junior professor or university researcher, and/or an outstanding career outside academia. Ability in and commitment to teaching are essential and it is expected that applicants will be able to teach in German after two to three years.

RWTH Aachen aims to increase the number of women in areas in which they are under-represented. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

With 30,000 students, 10,000 employees and its emphasis on innovative research, RWTH Aachen University is one of the leading universities of technology in Europe. Its teaching and research are characterised by a distinctly international, practice-oriented and interdisciplinary approach.

The successful candidate would join a department of four sociology professors, embedded in a research atmosphere with a new expansion of post-doc positions and interdisciplinary research. One sociology colleague is German, one is American, and the last position for a Macro-Sociologist has yet to be filled. The university has an international focus and seeks for 20% of the professorships to be held by non-German speakers by 2012. There is also a dual-career programme for helping spouses and partners relocate. The position is likely to come with a generous yearly sum for travel, books, and equipment, a position for a PhD-candidate or Post-Doc, and 15 to 20 hours of secretary support per week. Expectations for external funding and publications are the same as with American professorships.

Applications showing evidence of interdisciplinary work, experimental work, innovative new approaches to technical sociology, or general enthusiasm for the field will be especially welcome.

The language requirement in the job description has been relaxed since the description was written. The successful applicant can begin teaching and working in English and start using German professionally only after it is comfortable to do so (as the current American professor has done), perhaps after 5 or 6 years.

Aachen is an historic city located at the corner of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. The atmosphere is very international. Paris is 3 hours by train; Brussels is 1.5 hours by train, and Cologne is 30 minutes by train.

Please send a cover letter stating research aims and a CV to:

An den Dekan der Philosophischen Fakultät der RWTH Aachen  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Paul B. Hill, Templergraben 55, 52062 Aachen

The deadline for applications is 27 July 2007. In the case of international applications, the application deadline may be shifted into August or possibly September. Please write to [heather.hofmeister@rwth-aachen.de](mailto:heather.hofmeister@rwth-aachen.de) for further information or if you need an extension to the application deadline.

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**Postdoctoral Associate, Ethnographic Studies of Science and Technology  
Cornell University, Department of Science & Technology Studies**

The Department of Science & Technology Studies at Cornell University announces a position for a post-doctoral associate in the ethnographic investigation of science and technology. The position is available immediately for a one- or two-year period (negotiable). A Ph.D. or equivalent degree is required in a relevant field (e.g., science & technology studies, sociology, anthropology, history, communication, organizational behavior, strategic planning, etc.). Applicants with a degree in a scientific or technical field and a record of achievement in analysis of social dimensions of science will also be considered. The successful applicant will be expected to spend approximately half time on his or her own research and half time on a collaborative project “University-Industry Interaction in Emerging Research Collaborations: An Ethnographic Investigation.” The project will examine the brokering of collaborations and university-industry interactions around emerging nanotechnologies. The successful applicant will be expected to carry out an in-depth study using ethnographic methods of several university-industry collaborations. This is a great opportunity for someone who wants to acquire fieldwork experience in the context of a leading S&TS department, as well as to interact with researchers in nanotechnology, nanobiotechnology, and related fields about their work. For more information on S&TS at Cornell, see [www.sts.cornell.edu](http://www.sts.cornell.edu). Salary and benefits are competitive. Send a letter of application, c.v., writing sample, and the names and addresses of three references to: Postdoctoral Application, Department of Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University, 306 Rockefeller Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853 USA. (Applications may also be submitted electronically to: Stacey Sullivan at [sms252@cornell.edu](mailto:sms252@cornell.edu); be sure to put “Postdoctoral Application” in the Subject line of the e-mail.) Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Women and minorities are especially encouraged to apply; Cornell is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

  
**Fellowship, Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy**

The Alaska Center for Climate Assessment & Policy (ACCAP) in conjunction with the Regional Resilience and Adaptation Program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks is currently accepting applications for an interdisciplinary Ph.D. student to evaluate the science-policy interface in climate change adaptation in Alaska.

ACCAP's mission is to assess the socio-economic and biophysical impacts of climate variability in Alaska, make this information available to local and regional decision-makers, and improve the ability of Alaskans to adapt to a changing climate. This is a terrific opportunity for a motivated, interdisciplinary student interested in information transfer and development of strategies for improving communication between scientists and policy-makers. Applicants with quantitative and qualitative research experience who are interested in linking social and biophysical sciences are welcome.

Tuition and stipend are available for three years. Familiarity with climate change impacts in Alaska and with diverse Alaskan stakeholders is beneficial.

For further information contact: Sarah Trainor, 907-474-7878, [fnsft@uaf.edu](mailto:fnsft@uaf.edu)

ACCAP website: <http://www.uaf.edu/accap>

**Tenure-Track position in Science, Technology & Society****Sarah Lawrence College**

Sarah Lawrence College invites applications for a tenure-track position in Science, Technology & Society, beginning fall 2008. This appointment is a chair endowed by the Marilyn Simpson Trust. Candidates should have expertise in interdisciplinary science studies and their work should focus on the political, economic, and social issues arising out of the developments of modern science and technology. Teaching and research interests may include the ethical, social, and policy implications of biotechnology, engineering, environmental sciences, information sciences, cybernetics, or other emerging areas. We are seeking a candidate with teaching experience, a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and a PhD in STS, history, sociology, anthropology, or some other appropriate field. Interested candidates should send a cover letter, vita, letters of reference and two course syllabi by September 1, 2007 to: STS search, c/o Rosemary Weeks, Faculty Assistant, Sarah Lawrence College, 1 Mead Way, Bronxville, NY 10708.

Located in Westchester County, 25 minutes by train from midtown Manhattan, Sarah Lawrence is a small liberal arts college with a unique pedagogy based on small classes and individual tutorials. For information on Sarah Lawrence College, our curriculum, teaching methods, and philosophy of education, please visit our web site at <http://www.sarahlawrence.edu>. Sarah Lawrence has a strong commitment to the principle of diversity. In that spirit, we especially welcome applications from under-represented groups.

## Additional Announcements

### New Program in Innovation Studies

A new MA in Innovation Studies begins this September at the University of East London. For more information see [http://www.uel.ac.uk/ssmcs/programmes/postgraduate/innovation\\_studies.htm](http://www.uel.ac.uk/ssmcs/programmes/postgraduate/innovation_studies.htm).

Applications for PhD study are also welcome; we offer a three-year programme (full-time). Students who transfer to part-time status after the first year may work up to 20 hours/week on a student visa.

### New Website

Social learning is increasingly cited as an essential process for addressing the complexity and uncertainty inherent in many sustainability issues, and for developing understanding between the different perspectives involved. The Learning for Sustainability (LfS) website--<http://learningforsustainability.net>--aims to provide a practical resource for proponents of multi-stakeholder learning processes. It recognizes that social learning is an ongoing process which underpins health and other sustainable development initiatives, rather than an outcome to be achieved.

This international guide to on-line resources is designed for government and agency staff, NGOs, researchers and other community leaders working on complex issues such as peace, community development, public health and natural resource management. It acts as a gathering point for resources that have been developed in these separate sectors, and supports the sharing of ideas across sectors.

### Web Forum on “A Wireless Age?”


#### The Institute for Inquiry

The Institute for Inquiry recently launched its first inquiry, “A Wireless Age?” at [www.instituteforinquiry.org](http://www.instituteforinquiry.org) with an extensive look at changes occurring in physical, biological, social, and cultural life through uses of wireless technologies. This inquiry will unfold over the coming year. We are actively inviting academics, students, and grad students to respond to network invitations as contributors. And, have posted a number of ‘hot’ ideas for class discussion, research projects, or conference topics (see network invitations posted on inquiry section pages).

Currently available are essays and interviews with our lead contributors in Eco-phenomenology, the Public Trust Doctrine, EMF Science, and Soundscape Biophonies. And, 52 interviews, essays, and poetry from back issues of *Wild Duck Review* have been made free to the public for the first time on Journal/Back Issues page. WDR’s issue on Biotechnology was reprinted in its entirety by Sierra Club books as *Made Not Born: The Troubling World of Biotechnology*; and its contents are posted on site.

For a concise presentation of IFI’s radical idea for changing the news through rigorous inquiry with lead and network contributors, please read “Interactive Essay: Changing the News.” IFI is thinking in big picture terms—envisioning a time in the future when, looking back, it will seem perfectly obvious that bio-culturally based news inquiries were critical to providing the knowledge needed by individuals living and working in today’s world. And, it will seem perfectly obvious that such inquiries could be mediated swiftly, with power and intelligence, on the internet.

We are focused on producing new knowledge of the world that is made possible by inquiring into changes occurring there. For the first time, the heretofore unseen or taken for granted becomes observable and knowable (albeit provisionally). The inadequacy of existing theories or methodologies becomes apparent. New explanations and descriptions are called forward.



Please join us. And tell colleagues and students about IFI. We welcome you to write [casey@instituteforinquiry.org](mailto:casey@instituteforinquiry.org) or call 831.471.9246 with any questions. We've had over 80K hits on site since launch on 3.22.07

Thank you,  
Casey Walker  
Director & Editor

# SKAT Officers and Committees

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## Committees

### *Nominations*

Andrew Lakoff [alakoff@ucsd.edu](mailto:alakoff@ucsd.edu) (Chair), Chris Ganchoff

### *Merton Award*

Jason Owen-Smith [jdos@umich.edu](mailto:jdos@umich.edu) (Chair), Chris Henke, Laurel Smith-Doerr, Daniel Breslau (at-large member), and Jen Croissant (Ex officio).

### *Hacker-Mullins Award*

Kelley Joyce [kajoyc@wm.edu](mailto:kajoyc@wm.edu) (Chair), Andrew Lakoff, Scott Frickel. (Note: Section at-large position is unfilled at this time).

### *WebMaster*

Vivian Varela, Taft Community College,  
[varela@taftcollege.edu](mailto:varela@taftcollege.edu)

## Newsletter

Please send announcements and news to either editor. Contribute electronically, by regular post, or fax. Deadlines are:

- Summer edition--May 15
- Fall/Winter Edition--October 15
- Spring edition--February 15

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