

# The AGORA

Newsletter of the Rationality and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

January 2009

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## ASA Section Officers

2008

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**Brent Simpson**

**University of South Carolina**

### Past Chair

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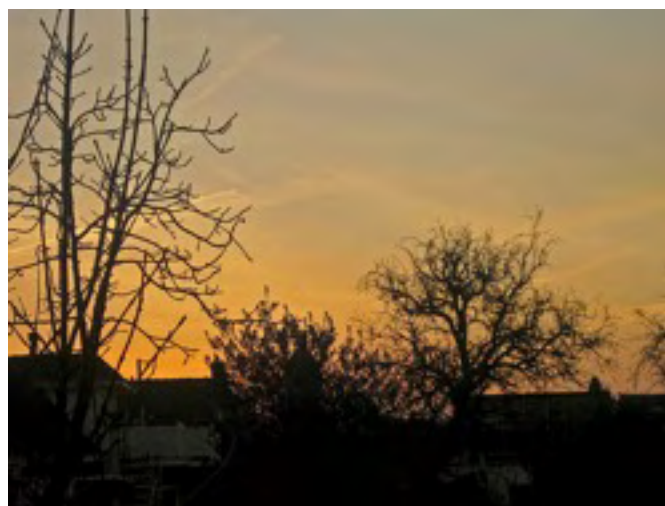
**Andreas Flache**

**University of Groningen**

**Jane Sell**

**Texas A&M University**

evening in Groningen



## From the Chair's Desk

**Brent Simpson**

[bts@sc.edu](mailto:bts@sc.edu)



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Greetings from the University of Groningen, arguably the stronghold of rational choice sociology. The upcoming year promises to be an exciting one for our section.

First, be sure to check out the call for section awards in this newsletter. Because our section did award any prizes last year, we hope to award twice as many this year to make up for it. Please nominate high quality papers and books. Self-nominations are also encouraged. The chances are better than ever that you or the person you nominate will win a prize.

Also, be on the lookout for many events at this year's ASA meeting in San Francisco. Because our section activities will fall on the last day, we will have two section sessions. James Kitts will be organizing

one on “Building Rational Choice Theories” and Dave Willer will be organizing a complimentary session titled “Testing Rational Choice Theories.” In addition, Guillermina Jasso will be organizing a regular paper session on Rational Choice. Submit your best papers to one of these three sessions.

The day after ASA, Yoshimichi (Mitch) Sato will be organizing a Rational Choice mini-conference. Mitch is making a special effort to keep the costs of the mini-conference down, particularly for graduate students. Stay tuned for further details about the mini-conference. In the meantime, plan to stay an extra day in San Francisco to attend.

Because the section did not hold elections last year, we will have a full slate of candidates for this year’s election. Remember to vote when you receive your ballots from the ASA.

Finally, thanks to Jane Sell for getting the Agora back up and running. Please do Jane (and the section as a whole) a favor by sending her (or me) any news, announcements, or findings from recent research that may be of interest to section members for inclusion in future newsletters.

Before closing, I should note that we are *still* the smallest section of the ASA. This is good news, insofar as you could have a noticeable impact on the size of the section by recruiting just one or two additional members. So please encourage others to join the section, or treat one or more of your graduate students to a section membership.

Have a nice winter holiday.

Brent

## **Call for Nominations for Rationality & Society Section Awards**

The Rationality and Society Section will award the following at the 2009 ASA Annual Meetings:

2008 James S. Coleman Prize for Best Book  
Published 2005-2008

2009 James S. Coleman Prize for Best Article  
Published 2006-2009

2008 James S. Coleman Prize for Best Student  
Paper 2005-2008

2009 James S. Coleman Prize for Best Student  
Paper 2006-2009

The Award Committee is the Council for the Rationality and Society Section for 2007-2008:

Andreas Flache (Council Member)

Edgar Kiser (Past Chair)

Trond Petersen (Chair)

Jane Sell (Council Member)

Brent Simpson (Chair-Elect)

Howard Welser (Secretary Treasurer)

Please send nominations to:

Brent Simpson : <[bts@sc.edu](mailto:bts@sc.edu)>

Any ASA member can nominate candidates for any of the awards. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2008.

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## Announcements:

The Second International Workshop on Social Computing, Behavioral Modeling, and Prediction will be held in Phoenix on March 31-April 1. It should be of particular interest to those social scientists interested in mixing with the growing community of computer scientists who are delving into social science issues. Last year's workshop brought together almost 100 computer scientists and others working on social modeling, simulation, and prediction, and included presentations by representatives from the National Institutes of Health, Office of Naval Research, and Air Force Research Lab, who are jointly providing funding for the conference. It is put on in cooperation with the Association of Computing Machinery, the main professional organization for computer scientists.



Evening in Phoenix

More information on the conference can be found at <http://www.public.asu.edu/~huanliu/sbp09/>. The program and presentations from last year can be found at <http://www.public.asu.edu/~huanliu/sbp08/program.html>, and the conference volume at <http://www.amazon.com/Social-Computing-Behavioral-Modeling-Prediction/dp/0387776710/>.

As some of you may know, there has been a huge increase of federal department funding for scholars doing formal and/or positive analysis of social behavior, as exemplified by the Department of Defense's \$50 million per year Minerva Research Initiative. Up until now, however, most of this funding has gone to computer scientists and engineers rather than to social scientists themselves. There are many reasons for this, but certainly one of them is the lack of familiarity by most social scientists of the potential funding sources and the criteria used in judging applications. This workshop is one way to gain such familiarity and to cross the "soft/hard" science boundary.

Feel free to contact Sun-Ki Chai for further information: [sunki@hawaii.edu](mailto:sunki@hawaii.edu)

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The Department of Sociology and the Interuniversity Centre for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS) at the University of Groningen is now accepting a limited number of applications for the 2-year Research Master programme. The Sociology Research Master is part of an interdisciplinary Research Master 'Human Behaviour in Social Contexts,' which in 2008 was ranked by students as the best Research Master program in the Netherlands in the behavioural and social sciences

Detailed information on the programme can be found for sociology at: <http://www.rug.nl/soc/onderzoek/researchmaster/index>

Application forms can be found at the general Faculty webpage: <http://www.rug.nl/gmw/onderzoek/topmaster/index>

## Post-doctoral Position:

The Center for the Study of Social Stratification and Inequality  
Graduate School of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan  
<http://www.sal.tohoku.ac.jp/coe/index-en.html>

The Center for the Study of Social Stratification and Inequality (CSSI) invites applications from excellent scholars for three postdoctoral positions. The center pursues development of new theories and methodologies on social stratification and inequality with emphasis on studies of rational choice theory, minorities (including gender stratification and inequality), East Asia, transnational migration (especially focusing on “newcomers” in Japan), and fairness. Faculty members of the center are sociologists, social psychologists, cultural anthropologists, religious anthropologists, a historian, and economists, and they study social stratification and inequality from various viewpoints. In addition, the CSSI conducts comparative studies of absolute poverty with the Stanford Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality.

Applicants should hold doctoral degrees or show academic performance equivalent to holders of doctoral degrees. They should have a good command of English. Postdoctoral fellows of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science are not eligible for this application.

The successful candidates will be expected to work under the supervision of the faculty members of the center for a one year period from April 1, 2009. (The date is negotiable.) Though the initial contract is one year period, the contract will be extended for one more year. The salary of a successful candidate will be 270,000 – 350,000 yen per month depending on his/her academic career. Travel and housing allowances will be paid to those who are eligible for them. Grants for excellent research projects proposed by the successful candidates will be provided. The center also academically and financially supports their presentations at international conferences.

Applicants should send a curriculum vitae, a list of their presentations and publications, a research plan at the CSSI (less than 1,500 words), each copy of three major publications at most, and a letter of reference to:

Dr. Yoshimichi Sato, Director  
Center for the Study of Social Stratification and Inequality  
Graduate School of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University  
27-1, Kawauchi, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-8576 JAPAN  
Phone: +81-22-795-6036 Fax: +81-22-795-5972

The deadline for completed applications is January 31, 2009.

All inquiries concerning the application should be addressed to Yoshimichi Sato at [ysato@sal.tohoku.ac.jp](mailto:ysato@sal.tohoku.ac.jp).

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of Mathematical Sociology - double special issue

Topics: "Formalizing the micro-macro link" and "How macro-level outcomes depend on micro-level assumptions"

Special issue editors: Marcel van Assen (Tilburg University), Vincent Buskens (Utrecht University), Werner Raub (Utrecht University)

Thirty years after the appearance of Schelling's famous *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, the special issue focuses again on the micro-macro link in sociology and on the role of micro-foundations for proper micro-macro links. One topic for our special issue is the modeling of the micro-macro link. Schelling and others highlighted an important contribution of mathematical models: they can help us to investigate the non-trivial ways in which individual decisions aggregate and evolve into group behavior and macro-phenomena. For instance, Schelling showed that increasing acceptance of non-whites by whites in their neighborhoods does not need to decrease residential segregation, thus contradicting a simple common sense theory. Schelling could only come to this unexpected result by simple though rigorous modeling of the group process.

A second and closely related topic for our special issue is how alternative micro-models of behavior affect macro-level outcomes. For quite some time, economists as well as (some) other social scientists have employed the standard model of the rational and selfish agent at the micro-level, sometimes assuming that macro-level outcomes are rather robust relative to deviations from this standard model. Contemporary research seemingly indicates, however, that deviations from the standard model can result in different, sometimes even fundamentally different, outcomes at the macro-level. The model deviations at the micro-level can be numerous, including assumptions on altruism, fairness, inequity-aversion, reciprocity, and risk preferences, but also assumptions on other than fully rational behavior.

For our special issue we invite submissions on these two topics. More specifically, we welcome submissions with (i) examples of modeling the micro-macro link, preferably examples with conclusions that might not have been reached, had the micro-macro link not been formalized explicitly, or (ii) examples showing whether and how different reasonable models of individual preferences and behavior result in different macro-level outcomes.

We do not want to be restrictive in terms of substantive topics or mathematical approaches. We thus welcome (i) contributions from diverse substantive fields of interest for sociologists, (ii) studies using analytic and simulation methods, and (iii) theoretical as well as empirical contributions.

Authors who intend to contribute to the special issue should send an abstract to [v.buskens@uu.nl](mailto:v.buskens@uu.nl) before February 1, 2009. Please observe this deadline. The subsequent deadlines are provided below. Final versions of papers should be no longer than 8,000 words plus tables and figures.

Important deadlines and schedule for further procedure:

- \* Submission of abstracts: before February 1, 2009
- \* Editorial decisions on submissions that seem suitable for further elaboration: March 1, 2009
- \* Submission of full papers: before July 1, 2009
- \* Returning reviews: before November 1, 2009
- \* Submission of revised versions of papers with "revise and resubmit" or "conditional accept": before February 1, 2009
- \* Final acceptance decision: before March 1, 2010
- \* The special issue will appear in 2010.



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The 13th International Conference on Social Dilemmas (ICSD2009)  
Kyoto, Japan, August 20-24, 2009

### Call for Papers

The next International Social Dilemma Conference will be held in Kyoto, a traditional area of JAPAN and one of the most beautiful cities in the region.

Conference participants who wish to present a paper or a poster must submit an abstract by e-mail to the Conference Committee ([icsd09@plan.cv.titech.ac.jp](mailto:icsd09@plan.cv.titech.ac.jp)), no later than March 13, 2009. The abstract should be written in English (in MS word format only) The abstract should consist of between 300 and 400 words and include the following headings:



Kyoto

- Title
- Author(s) Please mark corresponding author with \* and indicate contact details for the authors including names, surnames, organization/company, phone/fax no., e-mail and full postal address.
- Oral or Poster If you have preference between oral and poster, please indicate your preference for presentation mode.
- Aim
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact, Satoshi Fujii (Tokyo Institute of Technology) using the conference email: [icsd09@plan.cv.titech.ac.jp](mailto:icsd09@plan.cv.titech.ac.jp). Information about the conference may be found at the website (see <http://www.plan.cv.titech.ac.jp/fujiilab/icsd/>).

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