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PROFILE OF 2005 ASA MEMBERSHIP

Who Joined, Who Moved to the Top, and Who Is in What Sub-field?

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From its inception, the American Sociological Association (ASA) was designed to provide services for its members, to act as an umbrella organization for a growing number of interlocking sub-fields, and to advance sociology as a scientific discipline in the public interest. Over the course of its 100-year history, ASA went through cycles of growth and decline in its membership (starting with 115 members in 1906) and in the numbers and types of sub-fields. From the mid-1990s through 2001, ASA was in a period of small but steady annual membership decline. Between 2001 and 2005, however, membership grew from 12,368 to 13,848 members. This growth resulted from marketing campaigns and membership drives, exciting annual meetings, increased interest in additional sections, and demographic shifts. During this period, there was a general consensus between students and regular members as to the most important sub-fields.

This latest in a series of research briefs on ASA's membership shows changes between 2001 and 2005 for the two largest groups of members—regular and student members. It reports changes in demographic characteristics,

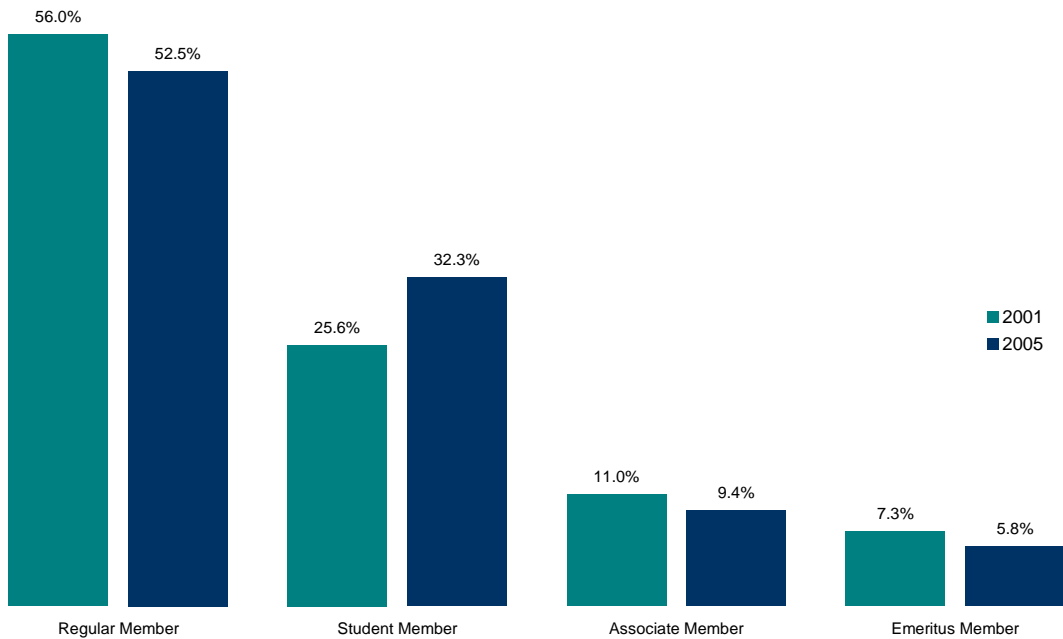
employment status, income levels, and the sections in which each group participates over the five-year period.

As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of members in the regular, student, associate, and emeritus categories has remained fairly stable. The slight 3.5 percent loss in the percentage of individuals who joined as regular members was balanced by a nearly 6.5 percent boost in student membership. Taken together, student and regular memberships account for 85 percent of the ASA membership in 2005, about 4 percent more than in 2001.

Once individuals join as regular members, they stay in this category until retirement and emeritus status. Nearly 95 percent of 2001 regular members also joined as regular members in 2005. In addition, a high proportion of 2001 associate and emeritus members (85 percent and 97 percent, respectively) rejoined ASA in these same categories during the 2005 membership year. In contrast, student members do change categories as they leave their student status. Although nearly 62 percent of 2001 student members signed up as

FIGURE 1

Distribution of Membership by Membership Type, 2001 and 2005
(Percentage of Membership)



Source: American Sociological Association, *Membership Database*, 2001 and 2005.

student members in 2005, another 35 percent rejoined as regular members.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF REGULAR MEMBERS

If the membership form provides a reliable source of demographic information, basic characteristics of the ASA membership changed slightly between 2001 and 2005. The regular membership has become slightly more female, slightly older, and a little less white.

By 2005, women increased as a share of regular members by 2 percent to 49 percent. The mean age for regular members in 2005 was 48 years, about one year older than in 2001. The median age of regular members held steady at 48 years.

Almost one in five members did not report their race on the membership form in 2005, with regular members more likely to report than student members. The percentage reporting, however, has increased between 2001 and 2005, from 80 percent to 84 percent. Overall, the racial/ethnic composition of ASA remained about the same in 2005 as in 2001. Over 80 percent of regular members reported being non-Hispanic whites in 2005 (slightly lower than in 2001). By 2005, the percentage of African Americans among regular members grew from 5.6 to 6.2. Likewise there was a slight increase the percent of Hispanic and other ethnicity regular members. These increases were offset with slight losses in the proportion of regular members who report being Asians or Pacific Islanders. Native Americans, who comprised only 0.5 percent of members in 2005, made up slightly smaller proportions in all membership categories than in 2001.

These findings, especially in the minority categories, may not be reliable because of small cell sizes.

ASA membership remained highly educated. Over 85 percent of regular members in 2005 reported having earned a doctorate, and another 9 percent reported a master's-level degree. Only 3 percent reported a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, while about 2 percent said they hold a non-sociological advanced degree as their highest degree, such as a JD, MBA, or MSW. These percentages remained unchanged compared to 2001.

EMPLOYMENT OF REGULAR MEMBERS

Slightly more regular members reported employment in institutions of higher education in 2005 than in 2001 (fully 83 percent in 2005). Another 8 percent of regular members were employed in federal, state, or local governments; not-for-profit organizations; or for-profit enterprises. Fewer than 2 percent of 2005 members either owned their own businesses that employ others or were independent consultants. The vast majority of ASA regular members were employed full-time in both 2001 and 2005 (88 and 90 percent, respectively).

Over 80 percent of regular members who indicated employment type on their membership applications reported holding an academic or teaching appointment, up nearly 5 percent compared to 2001. This finding may suggest a better job market for academics. Another 10 percent held a research position while 5 percent had an administrative position (primarily in institutions of higher education). The remaining 5 percent of regular members were scattered among post-doctoral fellowships; applied, non-research

positions; writing/editorial positions; and other work positions.

Gender

The gap in full-time employment between men and women decreased between 2001 and 2005. The percentage of women employed full-time increased by 4 percent compared to only 1 percent for men (88 percent and 92 percent, respectively). However, as in 2001, women made up a greater percentage of those members who were employed part-time or unemployed. Although women represented 49 percent of the regular membership, they held about 63 percent of the part-time jobs and were 55 percent of those who reported being unemployed.

As in 2001, a higher percentage of academic or teaching positions were held by men (52 percent compared to 48 percent for women in 2005), but the percentage held by women increased by 3 percent since 2001. As in 2001, women continued to hold 54 percent of research or applied positions. These figures suggest that women are moving into full-time academic jobs little by little.

In 2005, 84 percent of men and 81 percent of women were employed in colleges or universities that granted at least a BA in sociology. This was about 1 percent more than in 2001 for the men and 4 percent more for the women. As in 2001, these small differences are statistically insignificant after taking into account the highest degree obtained by regular members.

Race/Ethnicity

There were no significant differences in employment sector by race/ethnicity in both 2001 and 2005. Further, there were no differences in employment sector by race when educational attainment is controlled. African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic or Latinos are equally likely as whites to be employed in

higher education. However, the share of ASA members who did not report their race or ethnicity casts some doubt on the findings.

INCOME LEVELS OF REGULAR MEMBERS

ASA members pay dues according to their reported income. As Figure 2 shows, there are six income categories with the highest category (\$70,000 and above) becoming the largest category between 2001 and 2005. The other income categories stayed stable or showed slight declines. The increase in the highest dues category probably reflects the aging of the regular members into higher salary ranges. The average age of those in the \$70,000 and above membership level was about 57 (three years older than in 2001). The median

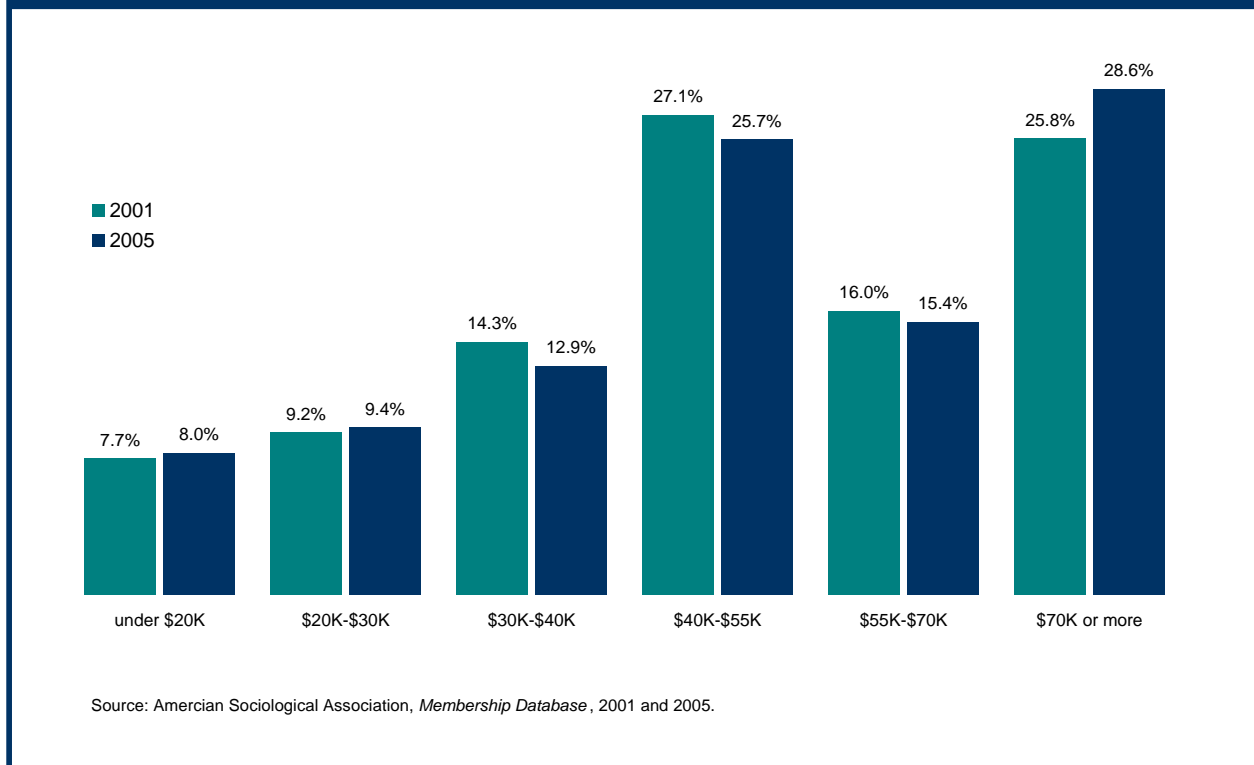
age of those in the \$55,000 to \$69,999 level was about 49 (one year younger than in 2001). The median age of members paying dues at the \$30,000 to \$54,999 was 43 in 2005 (two years older than in 2001). ASA cannot certify the veracity of self-reported income levels.

Gender

Differences between men's and women's reported income levels declined between 2001 and 2005, but inequalities remained. Over one-third of male regular members joined in the top income category of \$70,000 or more compared to about one-fifth of women members. The percentage of women in the top category increased from 19 to 22 percent during the five-year time period. Still, more than one-third of women who were regular members in 2005 joined at the \$40,000 or below income level compared to one-quarter of male members.

FIGURE 2

Distribution of 2001 and 2005 ASA Regular Members by Income Categories
(Percentage of Regular Members)



These gender differences remained when educational attainment was taken into account. Among men and women with PhDs, a significantly higher percentage of women than would be expected based on their proportion of regular membership earned less than \$40,000. In contrast, a higher percentage of men than would be expected earned \$70,000 or more.

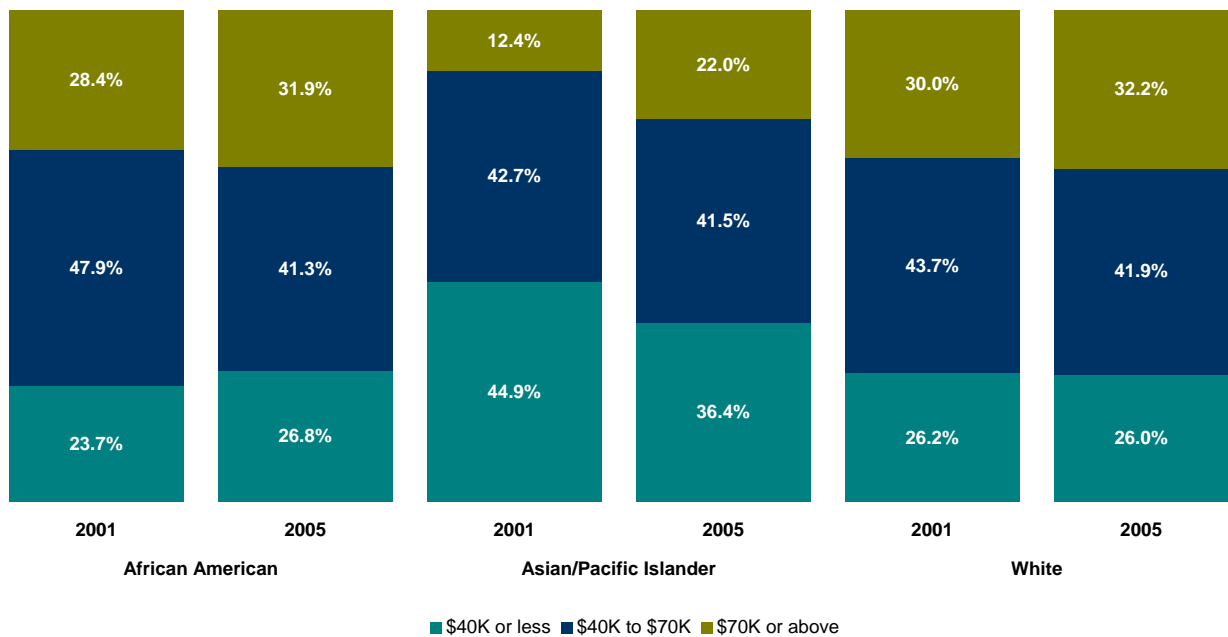
Race/Ethnicity

Figure 3 shows differences in the reported income levels by race and ethnicity for African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and whites. The numbers of Hispanics and Native Americans are too small for detailed analysis. Recall that in 2005, 16 percent of members did not report their race. In addition, the percentage not reporting race vary by income level with those at

the bottom categories (\$40,000 and below) having the highest share of non-reporters. If these findings are reliable, there were small increases in the highest dues category for both African Americans and whites. By 2005, almost one-third of African Americans and whites joined at the highest income level and the difference between these two groups was no longer significant. For African Americans the share in the bottom dues category increased slightly between 2001 and 2005, while those in the middle category dropped. This suggests that some members moved into the highest category from the middle, and some higher income members were replaced by those at the early stages of their careers. The share of whites in the lowest and middle categories remained relatively stable. The most striking changes between 2001 and 2005 were

FIGURE 3

Distribution of 2001 and 2005 ASA Regular Members by Income Categories and Selected Race/Ethnicity (Percentage of Regular Members)



Source: American Sociological Association, *Membership Database*, 1999-2005.

found among Asians and Pacific Islanders. For this group, the share in the top category increased by almost 10 percent, while the share in the bottom category decreased by about 8 percent. This suggests a movement up the ranks for this group. Yet, the findings could also be an artifact of the uneven reporting by racial and ethnic categories.

STUDENT MEMBERS

Student members represent sociology's future. In the 2005 membership year, the proportion of the ASA membership who joined as students was about 32 percent, up 6 percent from 2001. In contrast to a long-term trend of increases in the share of female student members, the share of male student members increased by 4 percent between 2001 and 2005. By 2005, men represented about 40 percent of all student members.

The mean age of student members is 31.5 years and the median age is 30, virtually unchanged from 2001, suggesting that many in this category were advanced PhD students rather than BA-level or new graduate students.

There was a dramatic percentage increase in student members from all racial and ethnic categories over the five-year period. Student membership among African Americans grew by 75 percent (from 177 to 311), whites grew by 60 percent (from 1,631 to 2,607), Asians and Pacific Islanders grew by 30 percent (from 145 to 202), and Hispanic student members grew by 34 percent (from 170 to 202). However, 21 percent of student members do not report their race, so these findings may be skewed by reporting patterns.

As in 2001, a relatively large proportion of non-whites were student members. Forty percent of all African-American members in 2005, 46 percent of

Hispanic/Latino members, 35 percent of Native Americans, and 32 percent of Asian Americans joined as students. In contrast, only 28 percent of white members were students. Although we have just seen movement into the top categories for regular members, these findings, if reliable, suggest that a substantial portion of ASA's minority population is still clustered in the student category, waiting to move into higher status categories.

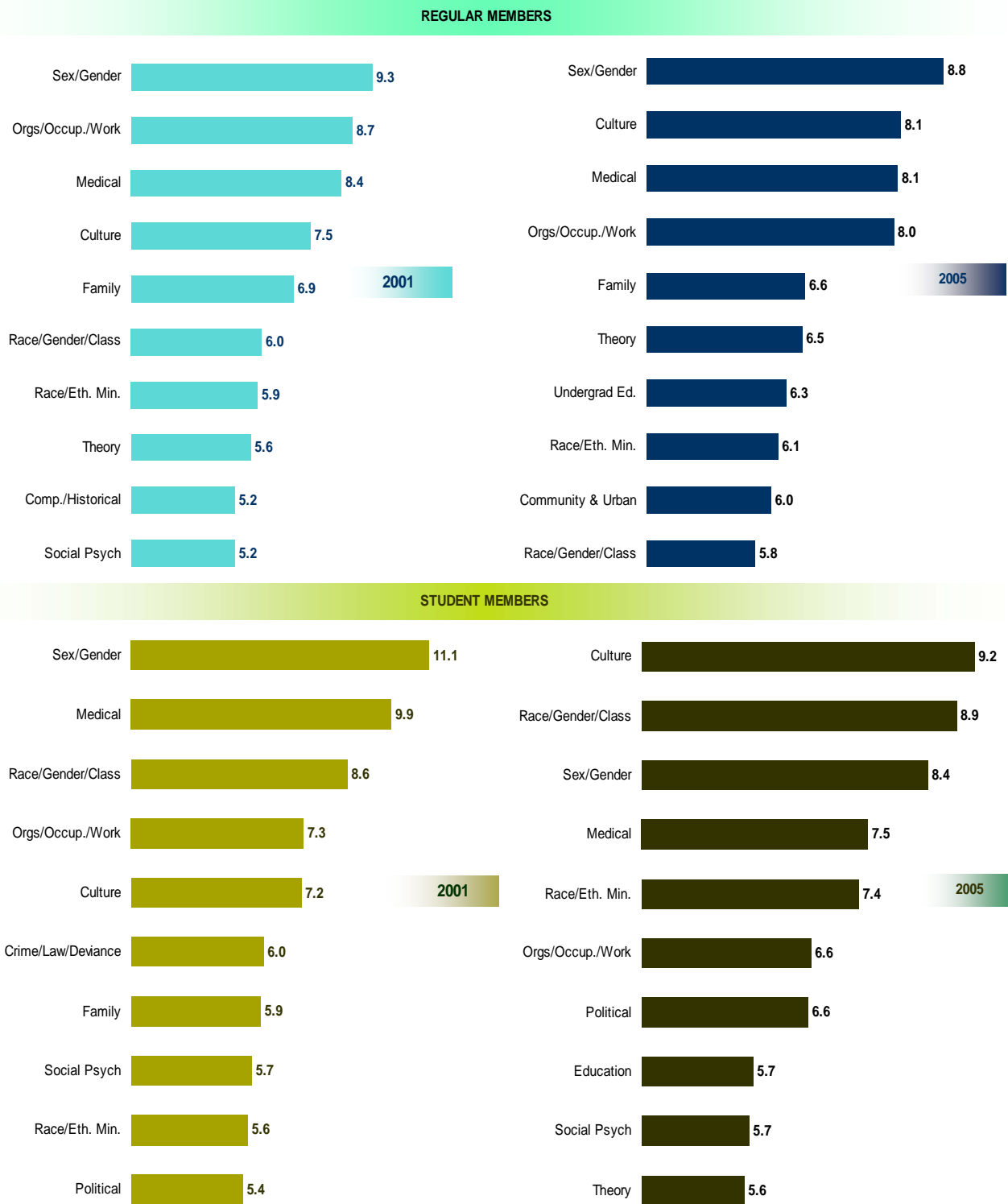
SECTION MEMBERSHIPS

Joining sections, the institutionalized form of sub-fields, is one of the most important features of an ASA membership. In 2005, a little over 68 percent of members signed up for at least one section, which is about 4 percent higher than in 2001. Regular members average two section memberships per person, with nearly 73 percent of them joining at least one section. Student members also embrace section memberships, although not at as high a rate. Their median number of section memberships is one per student, with nearly 70 percent of all 2005 student members joining at least one section.

If students are ASA's future, what can we tell about their interest in specific sub-fields as compared to those of regular members and changes in these interests between 2001 and 2005? Figure 4 presents the top ten section memberships for regular and student members in 2001 and 2005. The figure shows a general consensus as to the core topics, issues, and methods in the field insofar as they are reflected in section memberships. Between 2001 and 2005, two sections were no longer among the top ten choices of regular members: social psychology and comparative and historical sociology. Two new sections took their place: community and urban sociology, and undergraduate education.

FIGURE 4

Top Ten Sections for Regular and Student Members in 2001 and 2005
 (Percentage of All Regular and Student Members)



Source: American Sociological Association, *Membership Database*, 2001 and 2005.

Among students, two sections were no longer in the top ten in 2005: family; and crime, law, and deviance. Two new sections had taken their place: theory; and sociology of education.

Figure 4 shows that both student and regular members supported 7 out of 10 top ten sections. These included sex and gender; culture; organization, occupations, and work; medical sociology; race and ethnic minorities; and race, class, and gender; and theory. These differences over time and between regular and student members are not dramatic enough to predict the birth or death of sub-fields of sociology.

CONCLUSIONS

ASA membership grew by 12 percent between 2001 and 2005 with small demographic shifts. The organization gained in the share of members who were students, women, and minority groups. Among regular members there was a narrowing of the gender gap in the type of positions held and in reported income categories. In several more years, the female regular members who now join in the middle income bracket can be expected to bring greater gender parity to

the highest regular membership category of \$70,000 or above. As of 2005, however, they were still overrepresented in part-time, unemployed, and low income statuses. There was also an increase in the percentage of African-Americans and Asian and Pacific Islanders in the top income category, but the percentage of members not reporting their race or ethnicity means that these findings may not be reliable.

While there has been an increase in the percentage of members reporting their race and ethnicity between 2001 and 2005, there is an especially high non-response rate among students and low-income members. ASA has gone on record as supporting the continued use of racial classification data to assess the role of race and racism in society. Therefore, ASA encourages its members to stand up and be counted so that the Association can better meet the needs of all its members.

Finally, the relative stability of section memberships over the five-year period and the relative comparability of the top ten sections joined by student and regular members suggest a certain amount of consensus as to the core of sociology.