

DAVID YAMANE

RESEARCH STATEMENT

When trying to make sense of my research interests, Isaiah Berlin's distinction between the hedgehog and the fox comes immediately to mind. According to Berlin, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Although I have great respect for the sociological hedgehogs I have known over the years — Robert Bellah, Richard Schoenherr, Erik Olin Wright, Robert Hauser — I must admit that I am a fox in this framework. This is a product of my intellectual disposition and the style of work to which I am drawn. As I review my research to date and look toward the future, I note three important qualities, and conclude with some comments about a common theme in my work.

First, my work is *driven by problems*, not prior theoretical or methodological commitments. Furthermore, these problems are often rooted in my own life experiences. For example, my first book — *Student Movements for Multiculturalism: Challenging the Curricular Color Line in Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) — grew directly out of my experience as a student at the University of California at Berkeley in the late 1980s when the debate over multiculturalism in higher education was raging. My doctoral dissertation was on religious lobbying in the Wisconsin state legislature, a project that was heavily influenced by the fact that I lived three blocks from the capitol building and saw its dome every day from my bedroom window. When I arrived at the University of Notre Dame for my first job, it made sense to pick projects on the Catholic Church since the university is held in such high regard in that community. Hence, my two most recent studies: *The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands and Political Realities* (published by Rowman & Littlefield in 2005) and *Becoming Catholic: Finding Rome in the American Spiritual Marketplace* (currently in the writing stage, see Work-in-Progress).

By extension, the next project I undertake will depend in part on my geographic location and personal situation. My recent move from the Midwest to the South mirrors the shift in the American population from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt. One consequence of this shift is an increasing number and concentration of Roman Catholics south of the Mason-Dixon line. For example, the Catholic population of North Carolina grew from 64,243 (1.1% of the population) in 1970 to 296,922 (3.8% of the population) in 2001. So, while Catholic parishes and schools are being shuttered in the urban North, they are being built and opened in the South. The most recently opened Catholic colleges in the United States are both in the Southeast: Southern Catholic College in Dawsonville, Georgia and Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida. Mother Angelica's EWTN broadcasts from Birmingham, Alabama. And so on. What effect does this southward movement have on Catholics and Catholicism, and what effect does the Catholicism have on the South? As my tentative project title asks, are we witnessing

“the Southernization of Catholicism or the Catholicization of the South?”

The second major characteristic of my work is that it is *methodologically eclectic*. I employ both quantitative and qualitative methods as necessary to address the problem of interest (though I do tend to deploy these methods within the context of case studies). From my first published article (based on logistic regression analysis of General Social Survey data) to my most recently published article (which employs structural equation modeling on data I gathered myself), I have used inferential statistics when appropriate. I have also published work using interview data and textual analysis (e.g., these are the primary data for *The Catholic Church in State Politics*), and rely heavily on ethnographic field work for my next book, *Becoming Catholic*. Overall, I try to use the method most appropriate to the question being asked, rather than fitting my questions to the methods I like to use.

Third, my work is directed toward *multiple audiences*, including scholars in other disciplines and the non-specialized public. For example, my book on multiculturalism was written for all those interested in higher education, not just sociologists. My work on religion has been undertaken in dialogue not only with sociologists but with political scientists and religious studies scholars. My work on Catholicism has also given me an opportunity to carry sociology beyond the walls of the academy. In 2003, I published an essay in *Commonweal* magazine on “The Bishops and Politics,” spoke on the political consequences of the priest sexual abuse scandal at The Brookings Institution, and discussed the role that Catholics might play in the 2004 election cycle with journalists who cover religion at a conference sponsored by the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life. Most recently, in January of 2006, two of my students and I published *Real Stories of Christian Initiation: Lessons for and from the RCIA* (Liturgical Press), a book written specifically for theologians, liturgists, and practitioners who are interested and involved in the practice of adult initiation into various Christian communities.

I have relished these opportunities to translate sociology into a language comprehensible to non-specialized publics, and look forward to doing more along these lines in the future.

Despite my attention to these other audiences, however, I remain very much involved in the mainstream of the sociological profession. Most of my articles are published in sociology journals, I have served on the editorial boards of the *American Sociological Review* and *Teaching Sociology*, and I am currently serving a three year term as editor of *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*. So, my fellow sociologists continue to be the primary audience for my research.

My most enduring sociological interest — and the theme which is common to my major research projects — is cultural conflict and how it manifests itself in social institutions, especially educational, political, and religious institutions. This interest has

its roots in my early graduate studies working at the intersection of race/ethnic relations and the sociology of education. For example, my article, "The Battle of the Books at Berkeley: In Search of the Culture Wars in Debates Over Multiculturalism," explores the applicability of James Davison Hunter's "culture wars" thesis to a specific instance of cultural conflict: the struggle to institutionalize a multicultural general education requirement at UC-Berkeley. I find that the cultural debates which Hunter documents manifest themselves differently when examined in concrete organizations. This suggests the importance of studying cultural conflict as a situated phenomenon.

My dissertation research also concerned cultural conflict in a particular institutional context: the conflict – or, more accurately, the lack of conflict – between religious authority and secular authority in the Wisconsin State Legislature. I argue that in a secularized political institution, such as the Wisconsin State Legislature, there is no conflict between religious and secular authorities because those religious organizations which seek to influence the making of public policy must accommodate themselves to the political system's own secular terms. For example, I argue in "Naked Public Square or Crumbling Wall of Separation? Evidence from Legislative Hearings in Wisconsin" that religious advocacy organizations respond to the secularized political institution by making culturally – acceptable (read: secular) arguments for their policy positions – e.g., "rights talk" or the authority of science – rather than specifically religious arguments–e.g., the authority of scripture or pronouncements of religious leaders. This idea is elaborated using national data in the chapter on "Liberally Clothing the Naked Public Square" in *The Catholic Church in State Politics*.

A central concern of my ongoing research on conversion to Roman Catholicism through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is how cultural conflicts within the Church are manifested in the way adults are initiated. Just as people with competing visions of American society struggle to institutionalize their vision in school curricula, so too do people with competing visions of the Catholic Church struggle to institutionalize their vision in the RCIA curriculum. For example, progressives in the Church often stress spiritual *formation* of converts while traditionalists often stress doctrinal *information* for converts. At the same time, I am interested in the capacity of liturgy (ritual) to facilitate solidarity in the Church which transcends these conflicts. As Durkheim suggested long ago, lacking a common consciousness, modern communities may require common ritual experiences in order to survive.