



Update

No. 4 (10/26/2005)

Dear Members and Supporters,

This latest *Update* contains exciting new developments and calls for your participation so as to promote the development of astrosociology. From the beginning, astrosociology was proposed as a new (1) subfield of sociology; (2) multidisciplinary field of study within the social sciences, behavioral sciences, and humanities; and (3) multidisciplinary field involving all the space sciences. This last point of gaining acceptance of astrosociology among scientists and engineers within the space community represents a crucial goal, though I want to make sure to purposely bring in sociologists and other social scientists as well. In fact, then, astrosociology is proposed as a multidisciplinary field of study open to all scientists interested in issues related to the social and cultural ramifications of all aspects of space exploration. Collaboration among this diverse collection of scientists is the key to furthering our knowledge at the greatest possible level.

[A Changing Astrosociological Landscape?](#)

Unless I am overly optimistic, which I probably must be, tremendous changes are taking place with regard to the acceptance of astrosociology as a new field of study within sociology and, just as importantly, outside of sociology. While the ASA still appears resistive to a great extent, my paper this year was accepted for the Science, Knowledge, and Technology (SKAT) roundtables. Thus, sociologists who focus on science and technology recognize a potential for astrosociology to develop into an important subfield. Within the ASA, there is some support for astrosociology, though the extent of it still awaits confirmation. The CSA, a much more open-minded regional association, has allowed me to organize a session devoted to astrosociology for the second year running. (In contrast, the ASA rejected my proposal for a special session dedicated to astrosociology for 2006). My paper focusing on astrosociology and social problems was recently accepted for presentation at the upcoming Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) conference coming up in April 2006 in Los Angeles (right in my "backyard"). For those members and supporters unfamiliar with the

sociological community, the PSA is a major regional association. I wish to thank John Parker, organizer of the PSA Sociology of Science and Knowledge session, for this opportunity.

Outside of the sociological discipline, my calls for a multidisciplinary approach have received some positive responses. I presented a paper at CONTACT 2005 (see *Update No. 3*). Additionally, my paper was recently accepted for presentation at the next Space Technology and Applications Forum (STAIF). Familiarizing space scientists and engineers with the sociological perspective remains vital. Many individuals already see the value of bringing in the social sciences. On 10/20/05, I met Ronald Kohl at the LAX Marriott. We had a great conversation about space colonies and many other topics related to astrosociological issues. You should look into his space settlement project at the [Space Frontier Foundation site](http://www.space-frontier.org/Projects/SpaceSettlement/) (URL: <http://www.space-frontier.org/Projects/SpaceSettlement/>). These developments represent a fabulous opportunity to formally bring together the social science and space communities for a comprehensive understanding of astrosociological issues.

[The Astrosociology Curriculum Development Project \(the ACDP\)](#)

The details regarding this project can be accessed from the [Virtual Community page](#) or the [Submit Materials page](#). In summary, the ACDP seeks to encourage the development of astrosociological teaching materials and their inclusion into existing sociology courses/programs as well as other relevant programs (e.g., astronomy). The ACDP encourages integrating materials involving astrosociology into existing courses and developing Introduction to Astrosociology courses. And some day, it will include strategies to develop entire astrosociology curricula leading to the reality of an astrosociology major within sociology and other relevant departments.

Beyond this, an important element of the project involves those attempting to implement this strategy to communicate their experiences with others interested in doing the same. Early experiences with my own students reveal a substantial interest in astrosociology among sociology students. This and other indicators provides me with a great deal of hope for success.

For the educators among us, we must introduce astrosociology into our classes in order to build pressure within our departments from the student body and faculty to accept it as a viable subfield. One of my central arguments supportive of astrosociology relates to the significant portion of the public who supports our space program in the United States and space exploration more generally. I continue to argue that the high number of supporters of space exploration within the general population is, to a great extent, reflected among those in the student population. If this proves to be the case, the introduction of astrosociology into the sociology programs in the U.S. and throughout the world will potentially attract a greater number of sociology majors. Moreover, a substantial number of astronomy students, as well as physics, cosmology, and space engineering students will be interested in pursuing astrosociology as a minor. In my opinion, the addition of astrosociology classes into these curricula will provide students with a more rounded view of space exploration.

The ASA Conference

I encouraged all members and supporters to attend the American Sociological Association meeting taking place in Philadelphia, PA in mid-August. Two events involving astrosociology took place as indicated below. Thus, some success does exist within the national sociological association!

Astrosociology Forum: Sunday, August 14, 8:00-10:00pm / Room 305 (Marriott Hotel).

Science, Knowledge and Technology (SKAT) Roundtables: Monday August 15:
2:30–3:30 pm.

The *Astrosociology Forum* allowed for two hours during which advocates (and even critics) could come together to share ideas about astrosociology and its future. This second ASA astrosociology forum drew approximately ten individuals who expressed interest in astrosociology. No critics attended for the second year running.

During the SKAT roundtables, I discussed the major ideas associated with my paper called *Invitation to Astrosociology: Why the Sociologist-Space Enthusiast Should Consider It*. This paper is available for reading on the Virtual Library page. (Some day, a session presentation...)

The CSA Conference

The session panels for the California Sociological Association conference in November 2005 taking place in Sacramento, CA are now fully populated. The details of the two astrosociology sessions appear below.

Session Title: “Astrosociology: The Sociology of *Outer Space*”

November 11: 10:00 am - 11:45 am / Room ?

Organizer: **Jim Pass**, *Astrosociology.com* & *Long Beach City College*

Participants: ***Overcoming the Image of Little Green Men: Astrosociology and SETI***

Albert A. Harrison, University of California, Davis

Cosmology as a Framework for Social Analysis: An Astrosociological Perspective

Mark P. Ciotola, *San Francisco State University*

Isolated Group Interaction in Space Travel and Extraterrestrial Colonization: Preliminary Astrosociological Modeling of Space Communities

Gregory T. Morales, *San Diego State University*

Preliminary Findings of ASA Members' Attitudes Toward Astrosociology and the Study of Space

Marilyn Dudley-Rowley, *Sonoma State University & OPS Alaska*

Thomas Gangale, *OPS Alaska & San Francisco State University*

Jim Pass, *Astrosociology.com & Long Beach City College (non-presenter)*

Special Session Title: *Astrosociology and the Challenges of Interstellar Message Design*

November 11: 12:00 pm - 01:00 pm / Room ? (same room as above)

(PowerPoint Presentation only – no corresponding paper)

Douglas Vakoch, *The SETI Institute & California Institute of Integral Studies*

(primary author; unable to attend)

Jim Pass, *Astrosociology.com & Long Beach City College*

(secondary author; presenter)

By the way, the CSA changed their website address to the following URL:

<http://www.class.csupomona.edu/Organizations/csa/>

For those in California and nearby, you are encouraged to attend this conference. As you can see above, the panel for this session includes sociological and non-sociological approaches to astrosociology, though the general approach relates to topics involving “space and society” issues.

The PSA Conference

I met John Parker at the Astrosociology Forum that took place as part of the 2005 ASA Conference in Philadelphia. Following my PowerPoint presentation, he encouraged me to submit a paper for the Sociology of Science and Technology session at the Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) conference. It will take place in Hollywood, CA in March 2006.

My paper is entitled “The Potential of Sociology in the Space Age: Developing Astrosociology to Fill an Extraordinary Void.” As indicated above, John Parker recently informed me of the acceptance of my paper. For that, I am grateful. The paper is aimed at the sociological community, and specifically, its aversion to astrosociological issues. In large part, it attempts to demonstrate the importance of astrosocial phenomena in society by focusing on how they contribute to solutions of the major social problems we face. This argument addresses the resistance to space exploration based on the idea that we should first solve social problems on Earth before we waste tax dollars and other resources on space exploration. The faulty nature of this argument demands correction.

AIAA Presentation

I wish to thank Dr. Marilyn Dudley-Rowley and Thomas E. Gangale of *OPS-Alaska.com* (two definitely active members) for their roles in arranging for me to make a presentation about

astrosociology at the *American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics'* (AIAA's) *Space 2005* conference in Long Beach, CA. Specifically, my presentation was given to members of the AeroSpace Architecture Subcommittee, which is part of the Design Engineering Technical Committee (DETC).

I wish to thank Marc Cohen as well for finding time to allow me to make my presentation during the subcommittee's busy schedule. Beyond that, I especially thank Marc for accepting my argument that astrosociology's focus on the social environment can serve to augment the work of space engineers and scientists who tend to focus most strongly on the physical environment. Even more incredibly, Marc called for the establishment of an astrosociology session to be chaired by Dr. Dudley-Rowley and sub-chaired by me. Again, this tends to indicate that the "hard" sciences are more accepting of astrosociology than in the past. And the sociology continues to largely ignore the potential of astrosociology despite its growing recognition outside of the discipline.

Note: an astrosociology session is slated for the AIAA's Space 2006 conference (in September) in San Jose, CA. Please watch for details on the Calendar/History page as greater details emerge (URL: http://www.astrosociology.com/calendar_history.html).

The STAIF 2006 Conference

I sent out a message to several AIAA members explaining the relevance of astrosociology to the aeronautics/astronautics community. As part of her reply to this message, Anita Gale offered me the opportunity to submit a paper at the upcoming STAIF (Space Technology and Applications International Forum) conference taking place in Albuquerque, New Mexico in February 2006. It represents a great opportunity to introduce astrosociology to additional members of the space community as many have yet to even hear of it. Thank you Anita! I was unaware of the STAIF conference until you brought it to my attention.

On Thursday, October 29, 2005, I learned that my paper was accepted for publication and presentation at the STAIF conference. The name of the paper is ***The Astrosociology of Space Colonies: Or the Social Construction of Societies in Space***. The basic underlying theme is that we must begin to seriously consider the ***social environment*** in addition to the physical environment as we move toward the establishment of space settlements of various types. The paper offers a preliminary roadmap for a sociological/social science approach to the study and planning of space societies in collaboration with space scientists and engineers..

As always, all members and supporters are strongly encouraged to attend this conference. For those with backgrounds in sociology, the other social sciences, the behavioral sciences, and the humanities, it represents a refreshing opportunity to interact with scientists and engineers within the space community who already accept the significance and challenges of space exploration; and moreover, increasingly recognize the value of the non-physical sciences as complementary approaches to their own efforts. I experienced these types social environments during the CONTACT 2005 and AIAA

conferences referenced above. They seem to accept sociology as helpful to their efforts more readily than the larger sociological community! Again, I believe that establishing astrosociology outside of the sociological discipline is just as important as doing so within it.

[Submission of Papers to *Astrosociology.com*](#)

There are many ways that you assist in the development and acceptance of astrosociology beyond the ACDP. You are encouraged to submit papers of various lengths, including papers amounting to only five pages as a minimum length. The [Submit Materials page](#) was revamped recently for your convenience. It includes details about the ACDP and astrosociological topics you can write about. Despite nearly 100 members and supporters of *Astrosociology.com*, no papers written expressly for posting at the site have yet appeared there. Come on people, participate in the development of this new astrosociological literature!

Papers are reviewed by a three-person committee, including myself. Accepted papers will be posted on the *Virtual Library* page in the *Astrosociological References* section with a link to a PDF version of the entire paper. Authors retain full copyright privileges with the caveat that *Astrosociology.com* retains the right to post the PDF version of the paper indefinitely. This makes it possible for authors to present their papers at conferences and publish them in books, articles, and electronic formats. From time to time, members and supporters will receive calls for papers related to specific topics or for possible inclusion in sessions devoted to astrosociology included in various sociological and non-sociological conferences. Examples of each of these types of conferences are the CSA and AIAA sessions alluded to above.

[An Astrosociological Challenge](#)

An interesting idea occurred to me while at the ASA conference. I want to present members and supporters of *Astrosociology.com* with a new way of participating. **In this regard, I offer you the challenge of submitting references for sociological works related directly or indirectly to outer space.** All of you will receive the results. While I do not expect many to exist, let's see what we can dig up. A "pre-history" of astrosociological efforts from a sociological perspective provides us with a foundation, however flimsy. Non-sociologists are encouraged to participate as I know many of you have dealt with sociologists from time to time.

I will start things off with a well-known reference:

Vaughan, Diane (1996). *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Additionally, I am interested in past efforts to create a new subfield such as astrosociology within the sociological discipline. I encourage you to send me details about "exo-sociology," for example.

(This would be a great topic for a paper submission).

Please send your responses to this *Update* to the following email address:
update (at) astrosociology.com

Position on Editorial Board of *Astropolitics*

Eligar Sadeh, a professor at the Department of Space Studies at the University of North Dakota (see URL: <http://www.space.edu/>), invited me to join the editorial board of *Astropolitics* (<http://www.astropolitics.org/>), a well-respected space journal. Dr. Sadeh's invitation reflects his purposeful intention to bring sociology into the realm of space studies, a much needed reality in my estimation. Thank you Eligar!

Website Metrics

As of Friday, October, 21 2005 at 1:10 pm, approximately 62,120 visitors accessed the home page of *Astrosociology.com*. While all visitors are not unique in the sense that all of them accessed the home page for the first time in their lives, they did access the website at least once for any particular day. The website was uploaded on July 15, 2003, just 27 months ago.

Statistics also show that most visitors to the site review the home page without exploring the other pages of *Astrosociology.com*. This pattern of visitor behavior clearly illustrates that most who come to the website fail to learn about the many forms of participation and information available. I expect that some of the problem reflects the contents on the home page. I intend to update it when I can find the time. From my conversations and email exchanges with members and supporters, I find that many of you exhibit the same pattern. I encourage everyone to explore the website thoroughly! (See the *Astrosociology.com* direct page links below).

Ongoing Update Items

Astrosociology Section-in-Formation Petition. Creation of an ASA section devoted to astrosociology represents a critical step toward establishing astrosociology as a new *sociological* subdiscipline. If you have not done so already, please fill out the petition form at the following URL: <https://www.astrosociology.com/sectinform.html>. Instructions are located on this page along with a link to the ASA's website for those who need to join or renew their ASA memberships. Additionally, please contact any of your colleagues who may be interested and encourage them to sign the petition as well. For those of you who are not sociologists per se, but see the value of astrosociology and possess even a slight interest in the social sciences, I encourage you to join the ASA and sign the petition in order to assist us in meeting the objective of establishing astrosociology as a mainstream, legitimate subfield.

Ultimately, this social reality will benefit everyone interested in space exploration.

Astrosociology.com Directory. The *Membership / Supporter Directory* lists those brave souls who formally announce their membership and support for astrosociology. If you have not yet done so, I encourage you to demonstrate your support by submitting your name and information. This represents a very good way to show potential supporters, and even detractors, that a viable astrosociological community exists. As more members and supporters add their entries, the growth of the astrosociological community becomes obvious for all to see. Here is the URL for your convenience: <http://www.astrosociology.com/directory.html> (please use the online form).

Membership Dues / Supporter Donations. This appeal is included again because members have not responded in great numbers. As you can probably guess, running a website and paying all the promotional and conference-related costs to promote astrosociology becomes expensive over time. Please assist the effort to develop astrosociology financially if you possibly can!

Incentive: members who pay dues will receive an *Astrosociology.com* “Member” coffee mug at no additional cost. (Supporters may purchase “Supporter” coffee mugs for \$12.99 each and members can buy additional “Member” mugs for the same price).

Membership dues are \$20.00 per calendar year (\$15.00 for students – at any level). Current members are strongly encouraged to pay membership dues, even for 2005, of course. However, supporters are not required to pay dues, so members may change their status to “supporter” so as to avoid paying membership dues. “Supporters” will continue to receive updates and other benefits. However, I urge all supporters to change their statuses to “member” and pay dues so we can improve our ability to develop this new subfield. Either way, please be assured that your support is highly valued, and no repercussions exist for any action you take related to payment or nonpayment of dues!

The costs associated with developing astrosociology continue to mount. Despite the successes described in this *Update*, the expenses required to make them happen are not insignificant. For example, so far, the hotel and airline ticket costs necessary to present papers at conferences come directly out of my own pocket. Please assist me to keep things moving in the positive direction by paying your dues and making donations, if you can. Even a small donation helps. One sociology Ph.D. student donates \$10.00 a month even though his educational and living expenses are substantial. For a long while, this student was contributing \$20.00 a month in addition to paying 2005 membership dues. If he can do it, I believe we can all contribute as well.

While membership dues and donations will not cover all expenses, they contribute to paying for ongoing expenses related to my enduring development of astrosociology. (No funds go toward a salary or any form of personal compensation unrelated to the development of astrosociology).

Additional Astrosociology.com Pages of Interest. These links provide a good idea of what's on the website. Explore! Offer suggestions!

Calendar/History Page: http://www.astrosociology.com/calendar_history.html. This page displays events and achievements related to astrosociology and *Astrosociology.com*. The calendar section also serves to promote activities of other organizations related in some way to astrosociology. It changes on an ongoing basis, so please visit this page repeatedly to learn of the latest news. The history section chronicles important achievements on an archival basis. Many entries in the calendar move to the history section after they occur.

Inaugural Essay Page: <http://www.astrosociology.com/iessay.html>. Here, you will find my original two-part essay that addresses initial attempts to define astrosociology and offer indications of its purview and relevance. This is an excellent starting point for newcomers to astrosociology.

Submission Page: <http://www.astrosociology.com/submit.html>. The Submit page includes information about the ACDP and paper submission requirements. It also provides a long list of astrosociological topics for authors to focus upon.

Virtual Community Page: <http://www.astrosociology.com/vcommunity.html>. Although this page is still rather rudimentary in its capabilities, it represents a starting point for members and supporters to participate and provides links to the calendar/history, ACDP, directory, section-information, shopping pages, as well as links to *Space.com* headlines.

Virtual Library Page: <http://www.astrosociology.com/vlibrary.html>. This library provides references for publications and papers focusing directly on astrosociology as well as those addressing issues of space exploration more generally. Many of the latter are astrosociological in their focus and concerns. You are welcome to make use of the library and to contribute references to it.

Final Notes

To reiterate, your active participation drives the development process. While I have made significant progress in developing astrosociology, I could not have done so without the assistance of others who provided opportunities for me to succeed. If you truly support the development of astrosociology, I urge you to contribute papers to *Astrosociology.com* and other venues that bolster the themes found in the two parts of the Inaugural Essay and my other papers found on the Virtual Library page. We need to demonstrate that astrosociology is an important new field that can benefit scientists in all disciplines, from sociologists to rocket scientists!

Please send the URL for this *Update* to each of your colleagues whom you believe may be interested in astrosociology. Help spread the word! Thank you!

Best regards to all,

Jim Pass
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