Sects and Stats

Overturning the Conventional Wisdom about Cult Members

by James R. Lewis

DESCRIPTION:
A major, perhaps the major, focus of early research on New Religious Movements (NRMs) was on the people who joined. Most of the field’s pioneer researchers were sociologists. However, the profile of NRM members had changed substantially by the twenty-first century — changes largely missed because the great majority of current NRM specialists are not quantitatively oriented. Sects and Stats aims to overturn the conventional wisdom by drawing on current quantitative data from two sources: questionnaire research on select NRMs and relevant national census data collected by Anglophone countries. Sects and Stats also makes a strong argument for the use of longitudinal methods in studying alternative religions. Additionally, through case studies drawn from the author’s own research projects over the years, readers will be brought into a conversation about some of the issues involved in how to conduct such research.

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James R. Lewis is Professor at the University of Tromsø. His most recent books include Sacred Schisms (edited with Sarah Lewis, Cambridge University Press, 2009), Children of Jesus and Mary (with Nicolas Levine, Oxford University Press, 2010), Islamic Sects and Movements (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), Modern Satanism (with Asbjorn Dyrendal and Jesper A. Petersen, Oxford University Press, forthcoming) and Introduction to New Religious Movements (with Danielle Kirby, Routledge, forthcoming). He is editor of the Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements.