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## THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW, 1958-1960\*

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My first five years of work at Doubleday and Random House must have brought my name before the Council of the American Sociological Association as a possible editor of the *American Sociological Review*. For on other counts I had no visible credentials: my connections with scholarly journals were limited to the authorship of a few essays and a flock of book reviews. Even so, as a bold gamble, in 1957 the Council invited me to edit the *ASR* for a three year term. With misgivings, to be sure, I accepted this surprising invitation—thus taking on, with no decent preparation, an important professional assignment.

This new venture carried far weightier responsibilities than those of an advisor in a commercial firm. An important similarity between these editorial jobs was time-consuming labor with sloppy manuscripts, an exercise referred to below. As editor of the ASS's official journal, my contacts with sociologists of all breeds would be extensive, I would play a gate-keeping role in the profession, and this function

surely would call for more tact and courage than I had evidenced heretofore. But those initial concerns diminished quickly soon after "my" *ASR* was underway in the fall of 1957.

The move of the *Review* to Smith College was a homecoming event, for Frank Hankins had been its first editor more than twenty years before. But the return to Smith raised problems. Use of an office was approved by President Benjamin Wright, although with hesitation—as a historian of political thought he saw little scholarly virtue in the new-fangled "behavioral sciences." The office, a room of no more than 300 square feet, served as headquarters for my faculty activities as well as the *ASR*. It housed a secretarial desk, a small table, and a few shelves for the book review editor, some ancient kitchen chairs, and a child's desk for the editor himself. A greater handicap, or so I assumed at the outset, was the location of the journal at an undergraduate college which lacked the institutional facilities and ready supply of sociologists available at larger universities. On both counts, however, these anticipated difficulties proved to be of little consequence: the cramped quarters became a jolly center of magazine production and the Valley supplied a corps of able men and women who helped to run the enterprise.

\* This piece is taken from Chapter 6 ("Sociology and the printed page: Journeys of an editor") of the forthcoming volume, *A Lucky Journey: The Sociological Enterprise, 1931-1980* (tentative title; publication expected in 1981). [Address correspondence to: Charles H. Page, 7 Hampton Terrace, Northampton MA 01060.]

The local editorial staff began with a Smith College contingent of the sociologists Ely Chinoy, Neal DeNood, Allen Kassof, and Margaret Marsh, the anthropologist Alfred Harris and the demographer George Maier, plus Mary Goss who was then a non-affiliated resident of Amherst; later they were joined by the urban historian Eric Lampard of Smith and the sociologists Edwin Driver and Thomas Wilkinson of the nearby University of Massachusetts. These ten scholars included representatives of various subfields in sociology and of related disciplines as well as specialists on Soviet Russia (Kassof), Africa (Harris), India (Driver), and Japan (Wilkinson). Here was a highly valuable diversity of expertise. A great deal of the staff's work for the *ASR*, however, consisted of such unrewarding tasks as reading galley proofs, writing brief reviews of marginal publications, refereeing what appeared to be inferior papers, and, from time to time, attending staff meetings called by a demanding editor. These dreary chores were carried out efficiently and with few complaints. The non-glamorous work of these volunteers was essential for the welfare of the journal and, indeed, my own well-being.

But most of the day-to-day labor on the *Review* was done by the editorial secretary Betty Vogel, Michael Olmsted, and their nominal boss. Mike Olmsted was much more than a first-rate book review editor: he evaluated papers in his special fields with sagacity, he designed an attractive cover to replace what had long been the dismal front of the *ASR*, and, until the final days of his fatal illness in 1960, his warmth and wit brightened our lives.

Our office companion was the journal's anchor woman and, like Mike Olmsted, a great deal more. Under my lucky star, I found Betty following several interviews with unimpressive candidates; qualified editorial secretaries were in short supply locally. Betty herself had had no such work experience, but her keen intelligence, adaptability to novel circumstances, and enormous energy soon gave her mastery of the job. If the *ASR* was something of a sweatshop, moreover, it was also blessed with Betty's vivacity,

infectious sense of humor, and tension-breaking sallies. Betty Vogel was deflator of any signs of self-importance and guardian of our morale.

In bringing out a scholarly journal, Betty, Mike, and I, with periodic help from the local editorial staff, were a busy threesome. Meeting bi-monthly deadlines, regularly working on two or three future issues, and, by no means least, coping with a huge correspondence were something of a struggle. The *Review's* budget, in contrast with the less skimpy budgets of later years, permitted no copy editors or other supernumeraries—in some respects we were on our own.<sup>1</sup> But we also had the full cooperation and strong support of two ASA keystones: the Society's esteemed Executive Officer, Matilda White Riley, and Henry Quellmalz, the splendid and indomitable publisher of the *ASR* whose continuing friendship I prize.

Quite apart from budgetary considerations, much of my own work on the journal was self-inflicted, based upon the conviction, as I alleged, "that painstaking formulation should be an important part of scholarly craftsmanship" (Page, 1960). Whatever its source, my compulsion to tidy up the prose of fellow sociologists led to lengthy stints with the blue pencil in hand. It also brought commendation from some authors and, to be sure, aroused the ire of others. But this extensive copy-editing was well intended: I sought to improve the readability of the *ASR*.

This was a minor aim, however. In the fifties, according to many of its critics, the *Review* was theoretically thin, overloaded with small-scale research reports, and neglectful of important social and sociological issues—charges with which I agreed. Thus, as the incoming editor in the fall of 1957, I hoped to expand the jour-

<sup>1</sup> I managed to wrangle part-time assistance for Betty Vogel during her final year as editorial secretary. Beginning in 1963—and consistent with a recommendation of my final "Report of the Editor" (Page, 1960)—the *ASR* has received budgetary support for copy editing and other editorial functions. In recent years, *The American Sociologist*, *Contemporary Sociology*, the *Social Psychology Quarterly* (formerly *Sociometry*), and the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (all ASA publications) enjoy similar editorial assistance.

nal's theoretical content, to widen its substantive scope, to give more attention to controversial matters, and, in general, to heighten its intellectual tone. To attain these goals in any perceptive measure, I believed, would require fuller exercise of editorial authority than seemingly had been the practice in recent years. Accordingly, I was prepared to take such daring steps as changing a long-established format, requesting articles by leading scholars, and, when convinced of their faulty judgment, overriding recommendations of referees. Solicitation and independent evaluation of submitted papers by the editor, if practiced extensively, would be contrary to operating policy and, indeed, in my view, would justify powerful protest by members of the ASS. But limited and judicious use of these unilateral procedures, I felt, might help to revivify the Society's official journal.

As it turned out, there were no more than two or three cases of disagreement with the referees of papers. Several solicited articles were published, however, including pieces by Robert Bierstedt, William Goode, Everett Hughes, the anthropologist A. L. Kroeber, Robert Merton, Wilbert Moore, Talcott Parsons, and David Riesman. These requested contributions may have prevented publication of a few submitted papers, but they brought to the readers of the *Review* leading voices of American Sociology.<sup>2</sup>

Solicitation of papers by prominent sociologists, a very rare practice in earlier years, helped to upgrade the *ASR* as a scholarly journal—or so I was convinced. Another change was the introduction (in the issue of June 1958) of a division of the *Review* on "The Profession" which included not merely the obituaries, the dull but useful official reports of the ASS, and communications pertaining to the sociological guild, but both solicited and

submitted articles on the occupation itself. This innovation was consistent with my own growing interest in the sociology of sociology; of far greater importance, it was made with a view to the likely establishment of a separate journal on the profession, a frequent proposal that was realized with the first issue of *The American Sociologist* in 1965.

There were other innovations: the introduction of "review articles" on presumably major works in sociology, the publications of numerous reviews of sociologically relevant books in adjacent fields, the longer length of a good many of the papers. These various editorial changes, tolerated by the Committee on Publications and the Council of the ASS(A), required expansion of the journal—the *ASR* grew almost two-fold during my three years as editor.<sup>3</sup> This growth also required the budgetary support made possible by the boom in academic sociology and the large increase of dues-paying members of the Society. Here was another instance of the important role of luck in a professional career: my reputedly successful editorship had the strong support of history.

Fortune also favored me in the selection of Associate Editors, the *Review's* principal referees. Among them, as a nostalgic blessing, were the City College alumni [and former students] Alvin Gouldner, Peter Rossi, and Louis Schneider, together with such other fine scholars as Wendell Bell, Albert Cohen, George Homans, Mirra Komarovsky, Morris Janowitz, Philip Rieff, Melvin Seeman, Gresham Sykes, and J. Milton Yinger. Few inferior papers survived the evaluations of these sociologists. I had only two criticisms of a tiny few of the Associate Editors: what I viewed as their overindulgence of awkward or pretentious exposition; and occasional delays in the return of papers, a standard complaint of both contributors to and editors of scholarly journals.

No editors, I would suppose, escape at least some difficult confrontations with outraged authors of rejected or even accepted papers. I was fortunate on this

<sup>2</sup> My effort to enlist the mighty and "deviant" voice of C. Wright Mills was unsuccessful, alas. Mills, author of *White Collar* (1951), *The Power Elite* (1956), and *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), was perhaps the most influential American sociologist of the times—far more so, in my view, among rank and file sociologists, as well as non-sociologists, than Talcott Parsons.

<sup>3</sup> Explanation and tabular presentation of several of these changes are presented in Page (1960).

score: today I recall only four cases that threatened editorial and psychological trauma—and none of these, as it turned out, had drastic consequences. [To save space the account of these cases has been deleted.]

Episodes of this kind were hardly earth-shaking, and in historical perspective they appear as trivial editorial events. Far more troublesome than such rarities were regularly occurring situations faced by the *ASR* staff. One of these was the all-too frequent and prolonged procrastination of reviewers of books, a distressing matter for anxious authors and a vexing problem for editors. (This long-standing problem was transferred to the editors of *Contemporary Sociology* in 1972.) Another, but quite different, difficulty was the bi-monthly scramble to meet the *Review's* publication schedule. The tiny team of Betty Vogel, Mike Olmsted, and I, sometimes with the aid of all-night sessions, somehow managed to put the *ASR* together for Henry Quellmalz's printers in Albany—with only a slight delay of one of the eighteen issues of the journal. These victories against the odds were occasions for both self-congratulation and indulgent celebration.

We struggled with other problems of journal production, of course, most of which have faded from memory. But I recall, with immodest pride, our successes—"our" because they were the product of a collective effort. As the editor, however, I received the kudos. These included a batch of congratulatory letters, preserved in my otherwise skimpy *ASR* files, from associate editors and other sociologists which incorporated such warming messages as the following: ". . . we very much appreciate the work you have done as editor of the *Review* . . . and feel that the sociological fraternity is much indebted to you for your tireless efforts" (Clarence Schrag). "You did a really superb job during your three year editorship, and the whole Association is in your debt" (J. Milton Yinger). ". . . in my opinion at least, the *Review* has improved about a thousand percent (more or less) since it's been under your guidance" (Bennett H. Berger). Supplementing these personal—and, like Bennett's, hyperbolic—

messages, came official commendation: "Be it resolved that the American Sociological Association expresses its sincere appreciation to Professor Charles H. Page for his distinguished and discriminating service as Editor of the Association's official journal, the *American Sociological Review*, during the period 1957–1960. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

An indication that my editorship met the approval of at least some members of the sociological "establishment" was a proposal by the ASA officialdom, conveyed by Secretary Donald Young, that I continue as editor for a second three-year term. This surprising—and, I believe, unprecedented—invitation was gratifying, of course, but was declined on various grounds. One was my forthcoming departure from Smith—I could hardly move the *Review* to Princeton where I was to assume the duties of the chair. Another was my incapacity to take it easy on an editorial job—my three years with the *ASR*, given my compulsions, had been enormously demanding. But they also had brought very large rewards.

In later years, and in some small measure, I kept my hand in the publishing ventures of the ASA. Following my ex-officio membership while editor of the *Review*, I served on the Association's Committee on Publications in the early 1960s and, again, from 1972 to 1975. This period saw the proliferation of its journals (and of others in sociology, both regional and specialized) and the severance of large parts of the *ASR* with the introduction of *The American Sociologist* in 1965 and *Contemporary Sociology* in 1972. Today I see as a kind of historical irony the fact that both of these worthy periodicals—one primarily concerned with the profession, the other with reviews of books—give more and more space to theoretical and broad intellectual themes. It may be an ancient's egocentric observation to suggest that there would be less reason for this trend if in recent years these important themes had received greater emphasis in the *American Sociological Review*.

<sup>4</sup> From a resolution voted at the second New York Business Meeting of the Association, August 31, 1960, and published in the December, 1960, issue of the *ASR*.

Five years after my editorship of the journal an episode occurred marked by both delayed irony and serious professional delinquency. In 1965, while summering in Vermont, President Thomas Mendenhall of Smith College telephoned about an urgent matter: he declared that I must remove at once the several boxes of ASR files that had been stored in Tyler Annex, a small colonial building that had housed the *Review*. (In 1961, both the ASA Executive Officer and the new Editor of the ASR had declined to take over the files.) The space was needed, Mendenhall explained, for the production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" which was being filmed on Smith's hallowed grounds. I hastened to comply, and without encountering Burton or Taylor (alas), but with the help of friendly grips, managed to shift the heavy boxes from Tyler Annex to my car—and then faced

the problem of their disposition. As I drove northward toward Vermont, Ashfield's town dump, burning on that rainy day, suggested a solution. Thus the routine files of volumes 23, 24, and 25 of the ASR met a fiery fate. The ironic aftermath of this heedless act did not emerge until 1971 when I became chair of the Association's Committee on Archives— notwithstanding my report of this disqualifying crime of desperation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The seriousness of the crime was lessened only slightly by an earlier action: my removal from the files of several non-routine documents, some of which were turned over to Talcott Parsons, then the chair of the ASA Committee on Publications.

## THE ASA—1960–1962\*

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EXECUTIVE OFFICER, 1960-1961

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During the two years I was the Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association (then still American Sociological Society) we were a relatively small association. We had, as I recall, no more than around 8,000 members. The office was a single room in the Graduate Department of Sociology at New York University, of which I was chairman, in the Main Building of the University. The staff was small: myself as Executive Officer, Janice Hopper as Administrative Officer (a job well and competently done), a clerical secretary, at busy seasons an office boy or girl, in addition to a lovely woman, near retirement, who seldom appeared in the office but who had the re-

sponsibility for soliciting advertising for the *American Sociological Review* and arranging the book exhibitions at the annual meetings. Matilda White Riley, my immediate predecessor, had left the records, the files, the budget, and indeed everything else in excellent condition (Matilda could not do otherwise), and the momentum she had achieved was indeed useful to me. The job of Executive Officer was part time, and unpaid, but the others I have mentioned were on the payroll. New York University, incidentally, was hospitable to other learned societies as well, including the Modern Language Association.

Among the administrative issues to be dealt with at this time was whether or not to move the office to Washington, D.C. and appoint a full-time Executive Officer who would be able to look after our interests in the Congress—to lobby, in short,

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