Proposal for Editorship of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*

Richard M. Carpiano  
University of British Columbia  
Brian C. Kelly  
Purdue University

**Vision Statement**

We recognize the considerable opportunity afforded by the call for applications for the editorship of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior (JHSB)*. *JHSB* remains one of the most important journals within sociology, with the measure of impact factor rating it behind only *American Sociological Review, Annual Review of Sociology,* and *American Journal of Sociology*. In other words, it is one of the most significant journals representing the discipline of sociology, and indeed, it is prominent across the social sciences with respect to its impact factor. The journal is the primary site for major publications within the sub-field of medical sociology, which is one of the largest ASA sections. Thus, we recognize the great responsibility bestowed upon the next editors with regard to proper stewardship of this site of scholarly excellence.

It is a most exciting time to become editors of *JHSB*. Our view of medical sociology in 2015 is one of great possibilities. As a result of its unique multi-disciplinary origins and 20th century evolution, medical sociology currently enjoys an important and opportunistic intellectual space: one that connects core questions and concepts of sociology with ideas, approaches, and issues central to public and population health, medicine, health policy, and other health related fields. Decades of important theoretical and empirical contributions by medical sociologists—many of which have been published in *JHSB*—have advanced understanding of issues such as health inequalities, the institutional logics of health care systems and clinical practices, personal experiences and evaluations of illness, and disease definitions and their consequences, to name just a very few. Adding to these many established lines of inquiry are new emerging forays into areas such as biosocial pathways (including epigenetics), network dynamics of health, the health impacts of social policies, and the health consequences of incarceration.

Yet, for all its incredible successes pushing outward to influence thinking and understanding about health, illness, and disease—i.e. bridging to other disciplines—medical sociology’s important contributions to issues at the center of sociology—i.e. its bonding to the larger discipline—are not always so evident and, understandably, have even been a focus of criticism by sociologists within and outside the subfield. These bonding and bridging issues constitute the framework that guides our approach to editing *JHSB*. We envision a journal that publishes high quality medical sociology scholarship that pushes outward to inform health research, practice, and policy, but also remains connected to and engages with ideas from many other areas of sociology. This vision was central to our recruitment of seven outstanding deputy editors (discussed in detail below), each of whom are leading senior and mid-career scholars whose scholarship pushes both outward from and inward towards the heart of sociology.

Below, we detail our editorial vision for *JHSB* as the leading forum for influential, high impact medical sociology scholarship, and our goals for our possible term as co-editors.

**Goals and Opportunities**

Based on our experiences with *JHSB* as associate editors, reviewers, and authors—as well as our careful review of annual editorship reports—it is evident that Gilbert Gee will be leaving *JHSB* in strong shape for the new editorial team to take over. Given this situation, we will strive to maintain *JHSB*’s upward trajectory in terms of submissions, stature, and impact, by focusing on several areas:
1. **Encourage submission of focused conceptual papers and commentaries that aim to advance thinking about important areas of medical sociology and its interface with the rest of sociology and/or other disciplines.** Over the decades, theoretical and other non-empirical papers have consistently been some of *JHSB*’s most frequently read and cited articles, an indication of reader interest and their overall impact on scholarship. We fondly recall when, many years ago, *JHSB* would feature such papers—even provocative debates—with greater frequency. In recent years, each regular issue has primarily consisted of empirical articles—the few exceptions often being the regular “Policy Brief” feature, and the annual papers by recipients of the Leo Reeder Award (Medical Sociology Section) and Leonard Pearlin Award (Sociology of Mental Health Section). This is a lost opportunity to engage in deeper conceptualization of issues relevant for medical sociology as well as scholarly dialogue with other subfields of sociology—activities that are consistent with the traditions of the journal. Hence, we are keen to include more theoretical and conceptual papers in an effort to augment *JHSB*’s existing strengths and to promote productive debate within and beyond medical sociology.

2. **Increase the diversity of papers submitted and potentially published.** *JHSB* currently features articles focused on a wide range of topics; yet, its usual contents do not always sufficiently represent the diversity of high quality medical sociology research being conducted domestically and internationally. To address this, we will undertake efforts to encourage and increase the breadth of high quality papers submitted—in terms of substantive issues, research methods (quantitative, qualitative/ethnographic, mixed-method), and geographic foci. Notably, we will strive to promote the journal among various U.S. and international professional networks and societies that count medical sociologists among their ranks. As two scholars who conduct international research and maintain extensive ties to international scholars, we believe these efforts will also help to increase journal readership, article citation counts, and overall prestige.

3. **Enhance the Review Process.** Currently, *JHSB* has an excellent record on review time, with an average time of 5.96 weeks from submission to first decision. We would strive to continue this rapid turn-around time and develop ways to refine these processes—all while ensuring useful, high quality reviews. To accomplish this, we propose several policies, all of which primarily emphasize improving reviewer experiences.

   First, we will, like the current editor, initially determine whether the quality of each submitted paper warrants it being sent out for review (versus receiving a desk rejection). If so, we will then seek evaluations from three peer reviewers. Our goal will be to send papers out for review within 72 hours of submission, which we believe is feasible with 2 Co-Editors. For any R&R, the original reviewers will be used to evaluate the revised version, unless an original reviewer becomes unavailable. We will strive to prevent multiple “R&Rs” (a key source of reviewer burden—and author frustration) by encouraging reviewers to comment on the extent of progress made on the revised paper and to refrain from raising additional “new” points for consideration unless they are either major issues that would prevent further consideration or final clarifying changes for a paper that might be conditionally accepted.

   Second, we will establish annual awards for “Excellence in Manuscript Reviewing.” Review service is an absolutely critical, but often thankless job that scholars take on. Aside from a sense of professional duty, scholars have little incentive to accept their ever-increasing number of review invitations, as most departments do not reward this vital professional activity. Thus, we believe it is imperative to recognize the importance of reviewing and to incentivize efficient and high quality reviews. As such, we will award several reviewers at all career stages whom we determine have demonstrated excellence (via their quality, efficiency, and helpfulness) in...
reviewing for the journal. Those selected will receive a letter of commendation (potentially useful for promotion or merit review files) and be recognized in the journal.

Third, we will organize, at each ASA annual meeting, a professional development seminar on “Crafting Effective Paper Reviews for Journals.” These seminars, while designed for graduate students and early career scholars, will be open to all and relevant for JHSB and other journals. Reviewer comments that contain vague, unhelpful, and/or disrespectful content often do not help move the review process forward. As professors who place great emphasis on mentoring, we aim to do our part (with our own students and others) by trying to decrease such practices in reviewing, as we want to inspire constructive criticism that leads to manuscript improvement. In essence, we wish to help enable a professional culture change that we feel many wish to see. Perhaps other ASA journal editors might wish to join us in this seminar effort.

4. Increase JHSB’s social media presence. Presently, JHSB has a Facebook page and Twitter profile. In examining both sites, it is evident that they are underutilized, especially compared to other leading sociology and health journals (ASR, Social Science & Medicine, Sociology of Health & Illness, Sociological Science, American Journal of Public Health). This is unfortunate, as (speaking from experience) these mediums offer wonderful opportunities for engaging with potential readers and interested academic and non-academic audiences, including journalists, policy think tanks, practitioners, NGOs, government agencies, and the general public. Thus, we believe social media can be a platform to encourage awareness and readership of JHSB papers within and beyond the discipline.

5. Expand JHSB’s policy impact. Sociology is a discipline that often produces scholarship with the potential to directly impact communities and society more broadly. A key goal of our proposed editorship is our desire to expand the policy impact of work published within JHSB. The Policy Briefs feature currently provides a means to highlight policy relevant work. We intend to take this one step further by developing a “pipeline” that will channel JHSB articles with significant policy implications directly to the offices of federal, state, and municipal lawmakers and officials. We will develop a database that will allow us to feed brief “white papers” based on articles within the journal directly to such individuals with key public policy roles. Not only will this provide us with the opportunity to help sociologists make an impact on health policy and related policy areas, but in an era when funding for sociology via the NSF and other agencies has come under political attack, this will provide us with the means to directly remind policymakers of the importance of sociology for informing public policies.

6. Add JHSB to the Sociology Index in ISI’s Journal Citation Reports. We have always found it odd that, despite being an official ASA journal, JHSB is not listed within the index of sociology journals within Journal Citation Reports (JCR). We would like to change this. While such a change is not directly within our control, we will attempt to work with JCR towards the inclusion of this important sociology journal within their sociology index.

Co-Editor & Deputy Editor Background Information

We are applying as joint co-editors who have a well-established and successful track record of collaboration in addition to our own records of achievement. Our over decade long experience as research collaborators, co-authors on several articles (including a 2011 JHSB article), and trusted professional confidantes is based on our close friendship that began during our doctoral training at Columbia University approximately 15 years ago. Based on these experiences, we believe that we complement each other well. In addition to our strong ability to work together, our individual scholarly achievements have given us substantial experience to
lead the journal. Together, we have produced over 100 publications, including many articles appearing in outstanding sociology and public health journals and have won several awards for our scholarship. Furthermore, we have served as reviewers for several dozen journals in sociology and various health disciplines, have editorial experience, and frequently serve as review panelists for government research granting agencies. Hence, we have an extensive, first-hand knowledge of the U.S. and international landscape (and community) in which JHSB is immersed. Below, we discuss our backgrounds and detail our editorial office management plan.

Richard Carpiano is Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia, where he also has faculty affiliations with the School of Population and Public Health, the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, and the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP, a research and knowledge mobilization center for early life course health and development). Prior to his arrival at UBC in 2006, he was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2004-06).

Richard’s substantive interests center on the ways in which social factors, such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, social capital and support, and local community environments contribute to physical and mental health and health disparities. This work has focused on a range of health issues and US and international subpopulations across the life course (e.g., early childhood development, gay men’s health behaviors, maternal health, elderly nutrition, and most recently child vaccination coverage and refusal/delay). In addition, he has authored or co-authored publications on a number of other health- and non-health related areas, such as medicalization, public conceptions of mental illness, qualitative and quantitative methods, and theory construction.

Richard is currently associate editor for JHSB and Society and Mental Health. He has been active in the medical sociology section and ASA for over 15 years as both a member and an elected officer. In addition, he is the recent past elected Chair of the Society for the Study of Social Problems’ Society and Mental Health Division. He presently serves as an Advisory Board Member for both the Canadian Society for the Sociology of Health and the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science. A frequent review committee member for several international granting agencies, Richard has also served as a Scientific Officer for the Population Health funding theme for the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, British Columbia’s primary government funding agency for health research.

Brian C. Kelly is Associate Professor of Sociology at Purdue University, where he is also the Director of the Center for Research on Young People’s Health—an interdisciplinary research center that brings together social scientists from around the university with interests in the health and well-being of adolescents and young adults.

Brian’s program of research focuses on the influence of social contexts on health, including the roles of subcultural participation, social networks, neighborhoods, and policy contexts. For over 15 years, Brian has applied this focus primarily to the study of substance use, sexual health, and HIV/AIDS risk through ethnographic, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. He has received numerous grants from the National Institutes of Health to pursue a range of research projects related to substance use and health. Brian also serves on the Scientific Advisory Board of the United States’ National Drug Early Warning System.

Brian has been active within the medical sociology section of ASA for over a dozen years, as well as numerous other ASA sections, including having served as chair of the Alcohol,
Drugs, & Tobacco section. He has also served as a division chair within the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Brian is scheduled to rotate onto the Editorial Board of JHSB in January. He also has served as Associate Editor at Addiction, a top substance abuse journal, where he is specifically responsible for handling qualitative manuscripts, and is also Associate Editor at Frontiers in Immunology - HIV/AIDS. (Both of these editorial terms will be completed by the start date of the JHSB editorship.) Thus, he has acquired editorial experience, such as using journal editorial systems, which will be useful in serving as co-editor.

**Deputy Editors:** The Deputy Editors will serve as a senior advisory board and, in this capacity, will play an important role in shaping the direction of the journal. While we will not offer extensive detail about each of the Deputy Editors in this application, we do wish to highlight that we have assembled a group of sociologists with outstanding credentials and a diverse range of scholarly interests and methodological expertise. The Deputy Editors who have agreed to work with us are: Jason Beckfield (Harvard University), Sarah Burgard (University of Michigan), Robert Faris (University of California-Davis), Hedwig Lee (University of Washington), Bruce Link (University of California-Riverside), Sara Shostak (Brandeis University), and Margaret Weden (RAND). The intellectual breadth and depth of each deputy editor’s scholarship is consistent with our vision of medical sociology maintaining strong ties within and beyond the subfield, as they publish not only in top forums for health research, but leading generalist sociology journals as well like American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Annual Review of Sociology, and Social Forces. They will help us pursue our vision for the journal.

**Associate Editors:** With respect to recruiting Associate Editors for the Editorial Board, we are cognizant of the role that professional networks play in such appointments. As such, in addition to inviting leading experts to serve in these roles, we will also seek to minimize network biases in editorial board appointments through issuing a call for applications. While this call will involve an assessment of scholarship and other credentials by the co-editors and deputy editors, we believe it will also permit us to reach a wider array of scholars to consider for such appointments and thus increase opportunities for such scholarly participation beyond the primary networks of the current editorial board to those throughout the discipline.

**Structure of the Editorial Office and Process**

Our Editorial Office will be comprised of two Co-Editors, seven Deputy Editors, and two managing editors, along with graduate assistants. This model has been used successfully by past editors of JHSB and other ASA journals to process submitted and accepted papers.

As co-editors, we will jointly direct all aspects of the editorial office management procedures. These responsibilities include management of the peer-review process, identification and selection of appropriate and qualified reviewers, decisions on the manuscripts for publication based upon peer-review, interacting with staff at Sage to ensure the timely production of articles to publication, promoting specific articles to various academic and policy audiences, and networking with the appropriate offices and committees of ASA.

We have enlisted the support of an outstanding team of substantively and methodologically diverse Deputy Editors who all come from other universities. This will be advantageous for handling any papers that may present real or perceived Conflicts of Interest as well as ensuring that we locate the most appropriate reviewers for the peer review of
manuscripts. Furthermore, several of our deputy editors have extensive experience with public policy (e.g., Hedwig Lee, Bruce Link, and Margaret Weden) and we believe their involvement will be highly advantageous for enhancing the policy brief section and developing a network for the dissemination of the journal’s policy relevant work.

We believe that splitting the managing editor position into two part-time positions was a compelling strategic decision implemented by Gilbert Gee. We intend to retain this structure and believe it will also assist with the process of co-editing a journal across time zones. In this regard, one managing editor (located at Purdue) will be in charge of processing the review of papers submitted to the journal. Such duties include tracking submitted papers throughout the review process, communicating with both reviewers and authors, and managing the completion of final drafts of manuscripts. The second managing editor (located at UBC) will focus on articles that have been accepted for publication. Such duties include tracking the scheduling of articles, coordinating proofs with the copy-editor and authors, and performing other duties necessary for the production of the final article to print. The location of these two managing editors is strategic as the editorial office at Purdue (in the Eastern time zone) will be able to promptly initiate editorial work at the start of each week, while the editorial office at UBC (in the Pacific time zone) will manage production within the same time zone as Sage. JHSB has also employed a professional copy-editor who has worked with the past several editors and we would seek to retain this position with our editorial work. Beyond the managing editors, a Purdue graduate assistant will help build the “policy pipeline” we wish to develop as well as to assist our efforts in enhancing JHSB’s social media presence. A UBC graduate assistant will serve in a “flex role” to assist with the most pressing editorial tasks at any given time and to help ensure cohesion across the sites.

In developing the structure of our editorial office, we consulted with Richard Serpe and Jan Stets, current editors of Social Psychological Quarterly, about their experiences co-editing an ASA journal and with respect to doing so across time zones. Based upon our consultations, we believe that this is not only feasible, but even highly advantageous with respect to our ability to “extend the day” by working at the front and back ends of the time zones encompassing North America. To facilitate cohesion of editorial work, we will have the managing editor at Purdue prepare a “Monday Morning Briefing” each week for the co-editors and other editorial staff. This briefing will provide an overview of manuscripts processed within the past week, the status of manuscripts in review, and accepted papers in production. We will also interact regularly by holding weekly Skype meetings for the editorial staff (the co-editors will be in additional contact each week). The co-editors will also brief the Deputy Editors on a monthly basis and invite feedback on the journal’s activities and our efforts to achieve our stated goals.