

Minutes from the December 14-15, 2013, Meeting of the ASA Committee on Publications

Elected members present were Jennifer Barber, James Jasper, Erin Kelly (Chair), Annette Lareau (ASA President), Mary Romero (ASA Secretary), Vincent Roscigno, Steven Vallas, and Amy Wharton. Past President Cecilia Ridgeway also attended as an observer.

Editors present for the open session were Lee Clarke (Rose Series), Karen Hegtvedt (*Social Psychology Quarterly*), Larry Isaac (*American Sociological Review*), Kathleen Lowney (*Teaching Sociology*), Jodi O'Brien (*Contexts*), Alan Sica (*Contemporary Sociology*), Arlene Stein (*Contexts*), and Rob Warren (*Sociology of Education*).

Present from the Executive Office were Sally T. Hillsman (Executive Officer), Karen Gray Edwards (Director of Publications and Membership), and Janine Chiappa McKenna (Journals and Publications Manager). Thomas Mankowski and Eric Moran (both from SAGE) and Suzanne Nichols (Russell Sage Foundation) were also present.

The meeting convened at 9:30 a.m.

The Committee approved the agenda and introductions were made.

Kelly, as Chair, did not have a report, but thanked the Committee for its work since the last meeting.

Hillsman, as Executive Officer, did not have a formal report, but wanted to give thanks to ASA staff.

The Secretary did not have a report.

Contexts Report

O'Brien, co-editor, provided an overview of the memo distributed in both August and December meeting packets (the topic was slated for the August 2013 meeting but was tabled until December).

In the view of the *Contexts* editors, *Contexts* is not run like a traditional journal and should not be staffed like one. The managing editor works with authors, the publisher, and the designer. *Contexts* should have a full-time managing editor who does not change with journal transitions, therefore keeping institutional knowledge of the publication. *American Sociological Review* has kept the same managing editor across multiple editorships, reducing the need for hiring and training new staff.

Contexts needs a greater online or enhanced web presence to capture different audiences. The editors suggested keeping each issue open for 30 days to capture journalist (and potential subscriber) attention.

Contexts has published a significant amount of content in gender and sexuality, which could be published as a "reader" (and would not compete with other *Contexts* volumes).

Committee members felt the managing editor suggestion was a good one. Hillsman noted that ASA will work with the current and future editors to work toward these proposals.

Stein, co-editor, discussed building writing skills for *Contexts* authors. She noted that it is a challenge to alter writing from academic to the popular style needed in *Contexts*; writing workshops are really needed at the Annual Meeting. Jasper noted that there is a professional development workshop to be held at the 2014 meeting. The workshop is open to anyone and is not specific to a particular journal. Hillsman discussed the ASA Academic and Professional Affairs Program's efforts to improve writing skills in collaboration with sociology departments.

Lareau discussed the ASA Social Media Task Force as part of her presidential initiatives, noting that they have formed groups on blogging and promoting books and developed workshops on media and skill development, including writing.

Kelly asked for feedback from the *Contexts* editors on what actions the Committee should take. The editors asked that the *Contexts* webmaster role include increased social media presence and that the Committee support the proposed staffing request.

***American Sociological Review* Request for Additional Pages**

Isaac, co-editor, provided a brief overview of the editors' request for an additional 200 pages as a permanent increase beginning in 2014 (bringing the total annual page count to 1,298). New submissions surged during the current editors' term (possibly as a result from the transition to online submissions). The editors are rejecting more than they would like and they are concerned about the extremely low acceptance rate. Committee members, the Executive Office, and SAGE were all in support of the proposal.

Romero asked whether the request should be postponed until it could be built into the new contract in 2015. Edwards indicated she was willing to try to negotiate a waiver of the additional page fees if the Committee voted to approve the pages in 2014.

Editor Candidate Discussion

The Committee discussed the applications for *Contemporary Sociology*, *Contexts*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, and *Teaching Sociology*.

Russell Sage Foundation Update

Nichols discussed the Foundation's plan to launch an open access journal to, in part compensate for declining book sales. The budget for the journal will be cost-neutral; there will be four issues a year and each issue will be multidisciplinary and theme oriented. The new journal will be available on JSTOR, Project Muse, and the Russell Sage Foundation website. Russell Sage will market the journal the same way it markets its books. Articles will be both solicited and requested using calls for papers. They will also hold a conference for each issue.

ASA Open Access Journal

Hillsman provided an overview of the open access journal proposal and asked the Committee if it felt the model is going in the right direction.

The Committee noted some concerns about ensuring quality peer review, keeping barriers to being an author low, preserving the content permanently, and establishing the right copyright approach.

Committee members, while pleased that the revised mission statement addressed concerns brought forth in August, remained uncertain about the publication fee and would like to see a sliding scale of fees. Of particular concern was the impact of fees on scholars who may not have access to department funds, either because they are not tenured faculty or because they work at institutions that do not provide funds for professional activities. The Committee discussed a sliding scale or reduction in fees, but it was noted that a sliding scale makes the fee structure more complex to implement and the aim is to keep the cost of publishing this journal low, in part, through keeping its implementation simple. The Committee also discussed how humanities and social science journals create alternative payment models, rather than following the models developed by the hard sciences.

Edwards pointed out that the publication fee price is tied to ASA membership, in part to add a new member benefit. SAGE agrees that we will grant waivers to those who state they cannot pay the publication fee. Moran said SAGE assumes 5 percent of authors will ask for waivers, although the percentage is less than that for SAGE's own open access journals. The Committee stressed that the fee waiver option needs to be publicized and very visible.

Another concern was that the lack of a word limit for articles could increase the number of poorly written articles. Committee members wondered if the new editor would want to set word limits to address this. However, not setting page limits does not mean that articles would not be rejected as excessively "wordy" (poorly written) and therefore not publishable, no matter the length. It was suggested that "concision is encouraged" be added to the portion of the mission statement regarding lack of length restrictions.

The Committee also discussed the peer-review process for the new journal, notably the difference between an up-down decision and "light" peer review. Committee members wondered if there will be a mechanism to educate reviewers and describe how *high-quality peer review* is different from *developmental review*. They also discussed that authors might first submit to a traditional journal and, if they received a revise and resubmit, submit it to the ASA open access journal. However, if the ASA open access journal has rigorous peer review, it should not make it easier to publish.

The Committee also discussed possible titles (including a subtitle, which could describe the journal's goal) and created a list of potential editor candidates, while discussing the merits of soliciting applications versus inviting someone to edit, at least for the initial term. The journal

could have area editors to help with the review process and some area editors could come from ASA sections, particularly those that do not have journals.

Authors publishing in the new open access journal will retain copyright and an overview of creative commons copyright (authors can choose their copyright terms) was provided.

The Committee also encouraged \$10,000 in “start up” funds for the inaugural editor, to be used for travel, course release, or general editorial office support.

Ethics Subcommittee

Liao (over Skype) provided an overview of what was discussed at the August meeting regarding plagiarism and double submissions and the subsequent creation of a subcommittee on publication ethics. He reviewed materials from a non-ASA organization called the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE but *not* the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics) and also looked at what publishers and other associations do. The subcommittee decided to propose revisions to the *ASA Code of Ethics*, and the Committee was in favor of the proposal, making only line edits to sections based on concerns over specific words.

Hillsman said that the Committee on Professional Ethics (ASA's COPE) is going to form a subcommittee to update the *ASA Code of Ethics*. Kelly suggested that these guidelines be forwarded to ASA's COPE as part of the update and that journals include information on double submission. Liao suggested that journal webpages include links to the *ASA Code of Ethics* on the ASA website.

Journal Term Limits

Kelly provided background on the proposal discussed in August for the *American Sociological Review*—editors would be appointed for an initial three-year term plus a one-year extension; Council returned the proposal and requested more information as to why the other journals did not have a similar change in term limits.

The Committee discussed backlogs and changes in acceptance rates based on the stage of the editorial transition, noting that editors tend to accept less as the transition gets closer.

Editorial Office Funding

Kelly provided an overview of the August discussion of proposed staffing guidelines for editorial offices. Following that meeting, a memo was sent to editors, seeking feedback on the proposal. Kelly noted that in most journals the funding model increases support. The model focuses on full-time equivalents (FTEs) for each journal based on recent averages in staff salaries and would be adjusted for the prevailing wage rates at the site of a new editorship.

Clarke discussed the role of the managing editor of the Rose series. Kelly reviewed the staffing numbers and reminded the group that the dollar amount proposed (\$50,000 for one FTE) resets after each transition. Edwards discussed the current situation at Rutgers and acknowledged that was one of the reasons for developing a new funding model. Kelly proposed language that

would make the editors more comfortable, such as saying “comfortable with the staffing allocation but feel that \$50K is not enough.”

Hillsman discussed the copyediting support that was added into the Editorial Office funding model as well as funding for any special projects editors might choose; these are separate from the base staffing and related funding.

Romero noted that the Executive Office and Budget Committee and Council want editors to choose the best person for each position; one question is always whether the best person is always a grad student. There may be professional and institutional pressures to select a graduate student, but it may not be either practical (e.g., cost) or appropriate; for example, a grad student may be close at hand but may not be a good copyeditor.

Editors Reports; Guidelines on Resubmitted Manuscripts; Changes to the Publications Manual

Kelly gave an overview of the rationale for asking editors to provide more information on the number of revise and resubmits (R&Rs) still outstanding. She also asked editors if the current policies presented in the ASA Publications Manual needed to be revised, such as a suggested timeline for revisions.

The Committee suggested that editors could work with authors to determine a timeline for a resubmission, including providing a deadline that authors must meet; otherwise it would be considered a new submission.

In the interest of time, Kelly asked the Committee to send her any additional comments regarding the Publications Manual section on R&Rs.

The Committee then discussed reporting on multiple R&Rs and whether the data would be administrative for the Publications Committee or made public. The decisions made in that year could be divided into R1s, R2s, R3s, etc. A subcommittee was formed to revise the annually published table to include rounds of revise and resubmits (Barber, Isaac, and Warren [Chair]).

Survey of Authors and Reviewers Regarding Retention of Materials for Archiving

Kelly gave background information on the idea of a survey of authors and reviewers to ask whether they would allow their materials (peer reviews and unpublished manuscripts) to be retained by the ASA in an archive for future research purposes. Council wants the Committee on Publications to work with the ASA Research Department to develop such a survey. The Committee then discussed manuscript file archive (588 boxes for 1990–2010) and the survey sent to those authors and reviewers regarding the use of their materials.

Review of Editorial Board Nominations

The Committee reviewed editorial board nominations for 2014.

Changing the Size and Structure of the Committee

Edwards gave a brief summary of possible changes to the Committee, including changing the voting member from President (who typically is unable to attend the August meeting) to the Past-President. This item will go on the election ballot in the spring. There was also a discussion on whether the size (six elected members, plus the President and the Secretary) is too small to do all of the Committee's work. There were eight members when ASA had only two journals and it is still eight members with nine journals under its purview. As an example, the Committee ran out of members to do the work when forming subcommittees for editor selection this past year.

A proposal to add one more person each year (making a total of nine elected members instead of six) was discussed. Adding extra members would allow the Committee to do everything under its purview, such as reviewing the publications portfolio and looking long-range in the publications program.

***Society and Mental Health* State of the Journal Report**

Edwards reported on the state of the section journal report for *Society and Mental Health*. The Committee discussed the report and agreed that Avison did a great job as inaugural editor.

Lareau wondered if Section journal editors should be invited to the meeting. The Committee discussed why regular journals and section journals are different (e.g., the individual Section oversees its journal, not the Committee). Lareau proposed creating a subcommittee on cost-sharing with section journals; however, Hillsman suggested it was probably too soon, and it would be a matter for the Executive Office and Budget Committee to make a recommendation to Council.

Kelly suggested in August forming a subcommittee to think about the landscape of the ASA journals, both regular and section journals. Edwards recommended reviewing the publications portfolio and suggesting updates to it as part of that work. Hillsman was asked to draft a memo for August with ideas about what role the Committee should play beyond the "routine" matters that take most of its time now.

Executive Session

Blog Subcommittee

Vallas read an e-mail he sent to Kelly regarding merging the Blog Subcommittee with the Social Media Task Force. He pointed out that fixating solely on blogs would be a mistake since there are other media that would be ignored. There should be workshops on using social media with participation from section chairs. Lareau asked Vallas to join the blogging subcommittee of the Social Media Task Force.

The Committee discussed adding one digital media editor for all ASA journals, rather than each editorial office contributing a small amount of time. Edwards noted that ASA cannot require editorial offices to have a social media editor.

Wharton and Vallas volunteered to be the liaisons to the Task Force and they are seeking editors to join the subcommittee. Edwards suggested adding the incoming 2015 editors who could benefit from social media. Vallas suggested having a report ready by mid-February to send to Council.

Action Items

The Committee voted to:

- Approve the meeting agenda. Carried unanimously.
- Recommend to Council new editors of *Contemporary Sociology*, *Contexts*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, and *Teaching Sociology*.

ASA Council subsequently appointed the following editors:

- *Contemporary Sociology*: Michael Sauder (University of Iowa)
- *Contexts*: Syed Ali (Long Island University) and Philip Cohen (University of Maryland)
- *Social Psychology Quarterly*: Richard Serpe (Kent State University) and Jan Stets (University of California-Riverside)
- *Teaching Sociology*: Stephen Sweet (Ithaca College)
- Endorse consideration of a full-time managing editor for *Contexts* who could continue over editorial transitions, but the final staffing decision will be up to the new editors. The Committee also recognizes the issues *Contexts* faces and will work with new editors to implement some of these in a financially responsible way. Carried unanimously.
- Recommend to ASA Council that all editorial terms be limited to three years with possible extensions for fourth and fifth years, eliminating a possibility of a sixth year. The Committee noted it will proceed cautiously in offering the fifth year to any *American Sociological Review* editor, noting that this flagship journal is different from ASA's other journals with regard to professional development so the editorial term should not regularly exceed four years. Carried unanimously.
- Prepare a response to ASA Council regarding editorial office funding that states the Committee supports the core model of FTE for the future with the current commitment to copyediting, and that selections of future editors should continue to be made solely on the quality of the editorship not prevailing wage rates at the location of the editorial office. Carried unanimously.
- Recommend to ASA Council a change to the ASA Bylaws that the immediate past ASA President serve as a voting member of the Committee, rather than the President. Carried unanimously.
- The Committee will also revisit in August the possibility of increasing the number of Committee members.
- Send the Ethics Subcommittee's report on dual submissions, including proposed changes to the ASA *Code of Ethics*, to the Committee on Professional Ethics. Carried unanimously.
- Recommend to ASA Council a 200-page permanent increase to the *American Sociological Review* beginning in 2014. Carried unanimously.

- Approve the state of the journal report for *Society and Mental Health*. Carried unanimously.
- Approve nominations for new editorial board members. Carried unanimously.
- Approve the August meeting minutes. Carried unanimously.

The Committee also:

- Requested edits to the memo regarding ASA's new open access journal before submitting it to ASA Council.
- Merged the Blog Subcommittee with ASA President Annette Lareau's Social Media Task Force.
- Formed a subcommittee to update the annual editors' reports to include rounds of revise and resubmits.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The Committee will meet next on August 17, 2014, in San Francisco.