Minutes of the Committee on Publications Meeting
August 21, 2016
Sheraton Seattle Hotel
Seattle, Washington

Elected members present were Kathleen Blee (chair), Jennifer Barber, Paula England, Douglas Hartmann, Matthew Hunt, Claire Renzetti, Mary Romero, and Amy Wharton.

Incoming members present were Matthew Hughey, Veronica Terriquez, and David Takeuchi (ASA Secretary-Elect).

Editors present for the open session were Rory McVeigh and Sarah Mustillo (ASR), Michael Sauder (CS), Syed Ali (Contexts), Richard Carpiano (JHSB), Richard Serpe and Jan Stets (SPQ), Linda Renzulli (SOE), Mustafa Emirbayer (ST), and Stephen A. Sweet (TS).

Present from the Executive Office were Sally T. Hillsman (Executive Officer), Nancy Kidd (Incoming Executive Officer), Karen Gray Edwards (Director of Publications and Membership), Jamie Panzarella (Publications Manager) and Rachel Pines (Publications Assistant). Also present for specific agenda items were John Curtis (Director of Research) and Nicole V. Amaya (Senior Research Associate).

Approval of the Agenda. The meeting agenda was approved unanimously.

Report of the Chair. Blee noted that it was the last meeting for elected members Jennifer Barber and Amy Wharton and thanked them for their service. She also thanked retiring Executive Officer Sally Hillsman for her many years of service on behalf of the Committee, the Association, and the discipline. Blee expressed gratitude to the ASA staff who worked with the Committee, saying that their efficient and hard work made her job as chair manageable. She also introduced incoming Executive Officer Nancy Kidd, who will replace Hillsman in September.

Blee provided an update on activity related to the Committee since its last meeting in December 2015. The session on serving and applying to be an editor was held earlier at the Annual Meeting. It had a small turnout, but attendees were engaged and found the session helpful. She hopes ASA will hold a similar session at each Annual Meeting, focused on that year’s upcoming editorships. It is one important step in encouraging members to apply for these important positions. The Committee discussed other ways to promote ASA editorships in the future, including using social media and the monthly member e-newsletter to provide
information on how to apply and encourage session attendance by those who may be interested in serving.

She welcomed the new members of the Committee who were attending as observers, noting that the recent expansion of the number of elected members will help the Committee do the important work related to ASA’s publications portfolio.

**Report of the Executive Officer.** Hillsman reintroduced Nancy Kidd, who will succeed Hillsman as Executive Officer in September. She noted Kidd has been an ASA member for many years and will enter the job well prepared and experienced in the workings of the Association. While Kidd will remain at her current position for the next few weeks, she is committed to making this a smooth transition.

Hillsman provided an update on the progress of ASA’s website redesign. The goal is to have the new website be more interactive, useful and easy to navigate, while at the same time be mobile friendly for handheld devices. Content from ASA’s journals will be key to efforts to create a more dynamic structure, with new material on the home page to encourage frequent visits by members and others interested in what sociology has to say. The new website will be user friendly and will better promote the work of members and the discipline. Edwards added she has contacted and encouraged editors to routinely send in articles of broad interest that they feel could be promoted on the ASA website.

**Report of the Secretary.**

**Subscriptions:** Romero provided some general information on subscriptions to ASA journals. While “traditional” subscriptions have decreased by 2.3 percent (137 subscriptions) compared to last year, that is an expected decline that has been more than offset by increases in consortia and subscription “bundles.” These were the kinds of subscription arrangements ASA was unable to offer when self-publishing our journals. As anticipated when ASA began a partnership with SAGE, more institutional journal subscriptions were being purchased through consortia and bundle agreements rather than as individual journals, significantly expanding the reach and readership of ASA journals as well as the revenue to ASA.

Member subscriptions, however, have continued to decline, even beyond the decline in membership totals. This was also an anticipated decline, as members rarely add on additional print journals now that membership includes online access to all (non-section) ASA journals. Compared to 2015, mid-year membership totals are lower by about 1 percent; however, overall member journal subscription purchases have declined by 1.8 percent.
Romero shared the approved non-member and institutional subscription rates for 2017 with the Committee. The contracts with SAGE provides for annual increases for most of the ASA and section journals as part of the financial terms previously negotiated. 

ASA increased member subscription rates in 2010 by $5 across the board to reflect more accurately the cost of printing and mailing journal issues. As member subscriptions are now provided at no direct cost by SAGE (although that reduced the overall revenue share received by ASA in return), ASA is not proposing any additional increase again for 2017. Romero explained most ASA membership categories include one journal of choice and the number of additional journals purchased by members has continued to decline. There is little to be gained by further discouraging additional purchases.

**Update on Committee Recommendations for Support of Section Journals.** As chair of the Subcommittee on the ASA Publications Portfolio, Romero briefed the committee on the background of the proposals from that subcommittee that were approved at the Committee’s December 2015 meeting. The recommendations are intended to provide some financial compensation to the Association for the work done by ASA staff for section journals. Those proposals were considered by the ASA Executive Office and Budget Committee (EOB), which has requested input first from the Committee on Sections and the specific sections with journals before moving forward with any recommendation to Council.

**Archiving Editorial Materials.**

**Digital Archive Project Status.** Curtis provided a brief history on the project to create a digital research archive from the boxes of manuscripts and reviews from ASA journals that were retained from 1990 to 2009. The work is supported by a National Science Foundation grant.

**Member Survey on Future Policy.** At the Committee’s request (and subsequently approved by ASA Council), the ASA Research Department carried out a survey to assess how the ASA membership viewed the prospect of changing the policy on retention of future manuscripts and reviews, by modifying the agreements with authors and reviewers. At issue was whether a change in policy might affect scholars’ willingness to submit manuscripts to, or review a manuscript for, an ASA journal. Pending the results of such a survey, all manuscripts and reviews are being retained electronically. (As of 2010, all ASA journals are using web-based submission and review systems, so files are electronic, not printed.)

Curtis and Amaya provided preliminary results and analysis from the survey, which was sent out to nearly 13,000 members and closed in early March 2016. Responses were received from 3,426 members and, in general, favored the creation of a research archive of manuscripts and reviews. The issue of how confidentiality of these materials should be handled, however, needs further examination, as respondents were split on whether the materials should remain
anonymous. Further, the percent of members indicating that a change in policy (toward retention) might affect their willingness to submit or review a manuscript was, while not a majority, significant enough to warrant consideration when discussing whether or not to change the policy.

The decision on whether to retain or modify the policy will be considered at the Committee’s next meeting in December.

**Report of the Publisher.** Thomas Mankowski of SAGE briefed the committee on how journal subscriptions are categorized, providing additional information on the differences between traditional and consortia subscriptions. It has become more of a rarity than the norm for a library to subscribe to a single journal (whether in print or for online only access). Most subscribe to packages of journals (from small to large “bundles”) and journal revenue is determined by the share of a journal’s content across the full package.

Circulation numbers for the ASA journals remain very strong and expansion will likely be focused on emerging markets.

On behalf of SAGE, Mankowski thanked the Committee, ASA, and ASA editors for continuing to be responsive and efficient. He encourages anyone with questions or concerns to feel free to contact him.

Mankowski was asked whether he could provide any information on what SAGE offers in terms of financial support to editors/editorial offices for those journals SAGE owns. There is a subcommittee on the editor pipeline examining whether the level of support for ASA journal editors/editorial offices (real or assumed) affects the willingness of candidates to consider applying for an editorship (or the willingness of a current editor to extend their term).

Mankowski noted that SAGE was not privy to what ASA provides for its journals (except for section journals, the editorial office expenses are not part of the financial arrangement with SAGE), but listening to the discussions at various meetings lead him to believe that ASA’s support package is more generous than that of many other societies.

**Update on Socius.** Based on manuscript submissions and articles published to date, Edwards reported that *Socius* has exceeded ASA’s expectations 12 months post-launch. To date (between January and August), 25 articles have been published, including the work of advanced graduate students as well as prominent senior scholars. This was the hope of the ASA when *Socius* was first envisioned, and it is a testament to the inaugural editors that *Socius* being a possible home for good work in all areas by all kinds of authors has been the case.
While the Committee on Publications and ASA Council approved waivers for any accepted *Socius* author who was unable to pay the publication fee, to date only one waiver has been requested and approved. Edwards feels that this is an indication that authors are finding the fees fair and reasonable, but also is in the process of considering whether the timing and language about the availability of waivers is playing a part in the lower than anticipated number of requests.

The contract with SAGE is such that ASA provides the editorial office support, SAGE provides the submission/review system and journal hosting, and the two organizations share the submission and publication fees equally. In 2015, that resulted in total revenue of $1,225 (about half submission fees and a small number of publication fees). By the end of 2016, Edwards anticipates that ASA revenue for *Socius* will be approximately $8,000 for the year, roughly the same cost as the editorial office expenses (excluding the modest editor honorarium).

**Report of the Subcommittee on the Editor Pipeline.** Hartman provided a brief overview of the history of the subcommittee. Its mandate is to examine what barriers may exist to scholars applying for editorships that will include examination of the resources provided to editors by ASA and host institutions, as well as the needs presented by potential editors. The questions to be answered are basically what support there is for ASA editors, how that compares to support from other societies to other journals, and whether the existing support is a barrier to finding editors for our journals.

Edwards reminded the committee there was a subcommittee that was established to provide guidelines on staff for ASA editorial offices based on criteria including manuscripts submitted, articles published, and frequency of publication. It has significantly reduced the difficulty of negotiating with new host institutions. Further, it allowed more flexibility in considering alternative models of support—for example, if a host institution is willing to provide a no-cost graduate student but will not waive course release costs, as long as the overall cost to the ASA is within the presumed budget for staffing, ASA is able to consider different models. The Committee asked that the calls for editor candidates be modified to provide more detail on the budget and the possibility of alternative funding models within that budget.

**Definition of Originality in Journal Submissions.** *ASR* editor McVeigh noted his and other editors’ concern that authors were more frequently engaging in the practice known as “salami slicing”—submitting articles that represent very small advances over previous work they have published. Most ASA journals are charged with publishing groundbreaking research and can publish only a limited number of articles each year.
More articles are being rejected in large part on the grounds that they do not represent a significant enough advancement on previously published work by the same author(s). It is impossible for any editor (or reviewer) to be familiar with all work in any given area and it can be frustrating to spend time on a manuscript (particularly if ultimately rejected) that should not have been submitted in the first place.

ASR has had to spend more time routinely checking author’s submission history or searching the author’s online CV to check if prior publications seem to be closely related to a new submission. McVeigh and his co-editors are thus asking for the Committee’s support in “beefing up” the questions on originality that are asked of authors at submission. While it will not solve the problem completely, it will send a much stronger signal to authors at the earliest stage about the expectation of the journal about originality of submissions.

At the present time, the statement a submitting author must confirm is: “Confirm that the manuscript has been submitted solely to this journal and is not published, in press, or submitted elsewhere.”

ASR would like to add the following statement: “Confirm that the submitted manuscript is significantly different from work you (or coauthors) have published, or have in press or under review at another journal, and that any prior work you have done related to the current submission has been appropriately cited in the text in a way that does not reveal your identity to reviewers.”

**Joint Committee on the Future of Contexts Report/Recommendations.** England, who chaired the joint committee, reported that the group (after spending a year examining a number of alternatives) had approved a formal recommendation to proceed with negotiating a five-year extension with SAGE with significantly expanded open access content. The joint committee’s primary mandate was finding what was possible to help get sociology out to non-sociologists. A preliminary discussion with SAGE has resulted in their commitment to allowing all Contexts content to go open access after 12 months, while retaining the immediate freely-available feature at initial publication as well as the 30-days free after publication for each issue—all without any changes in the other financial terms of the contract.

The joint committee also asked that the call for editor candidates for Contexts ask applicants to address (1) how they would produce and direct readers to web-only content to supplement the magazine; (2) how they would encourage the press, policymakers, and the public to access open articles on the Contexts website; and (3) to provide their ideas for, once during their editorship, to edit a reader to be used in generalist undergraduate courses.

**Editor Selections and Appointment of Review Subcommittees.** The Committee submitted names of individuals who should receive invitations to apply for the editorships of Contexts, the
Rose Series, and *Social Psychology Quarterly*. These individuals (and others that Committee members and editors send to the ASA office by September 1) will receive formal letters of invitation to apply, and an open call will be published online and in *Footnotes*. The Committee also created a subcommittee for each editorship that will work to ensure an adequate pool of candidates, to review applications, to present the Committee with an overview and pre-ranking in December, and to provide a routine review using data provided for that purpose. Hartmann will chair the *Contexts* subcommittee with Ali and Hughey as members; Renzetti will chair the Rose Series subcommittee with Roos and Kimmel as members; and Hunt will chair the *SPQ* subcommittee with Stets and Terriquez as members.

**Recommendation for New Guidelines on Section Sponsorships of Books/Book Series.** Over the last few years, the Committee on Publications has received (and approved) a number of requests from ASA sections to sponsor books or book series. There have been concerns about whether such sponsorships are appropriate for the ASA imprimatur (through its sections), particularly as there are no guidelines or criteria to use to consider the proposals. Further, it has created an opening for publishers to “use” ASA sections to develop what would appear to be a broader affiliation to ASA through low-cost arrangements with sections.

The Subcommittee on the Publications Portfolio was charged with developing guidelines for such proposals, and subcommittee chair Romero presented proposed guidelines for the Committee’s consideration.

The most recent proposal was approved for one year, in light of the Committee’s work toward developing guidelines for section sponsorships of books/book series, and two other previously approved proposals will expire at the end of 2016. Any extension would be reviewed under the terms of any new guidelines.

There was considerable disagreement during the discussion about whether it was in ASA and its sections’ best interest to allow such “hands off” low-support sponsorships. Some members felt that only the kind of affiliation required of section journals (where ASA owned the copyright, sections selected editors, etc.) should be considered. Other members felt that no formal sponsorships of any kind should be considered as there are already other alternatives (e.g., donation of book royalties) as a means of revenue generation to sections. And, even members who supported the kind of sponsorships allowed by the proposed guidelines felt that the financial “reward” provided to sections by publishers was inadequate.

The proposed guidelines, which presumed the same kind of sponsorships as were already in place but with more financial benefit to sections, were ultimately rejected by the Committee. Romero was asked, and agreed, to continue to work with the ASA office to develop a new set of proposed guidelines that would take the reasons for rejecting the ones presented at this
meeting into account. A new set of proposed guidelines will be presented to the Committee at its December meeting.

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Journal Portfolio.** The Subcommittee on the Publications Portfolio will now be a Standing Committee on the Publications Portfolio. As all members of the subcommittee are rotating off the Committee on Publications, new members and a new chair need to be appointed. The Committee decided the current ASA secretary should remain chair, so David Takeuchi will chair during his term as ASA Secretary. Glick and Stewart, both incoming members of the Committee, will serve as members.

**Publication Data for Routine and Portfolio Reviews.** The committee reviewed the data provided for both the routine reviews of publications beginning the selection process for editors as well as for the Standing Subcommittee on the Journal Portfolio to use to guide its annual discussion each December. The annual discussion will focus on whether there are gaps in the stable of ASA journals as well as whether any existing journal should be changed in order to meet its current or a new mandate.

**Review of Editorial Board Nominations.** The committee reviewed the nominations for new editorial board members for ASA journals and the Rose Series.

**New Business.**

**Editors’ Roles as Developers and Evaluators of Scholarship.** Edwards provided a handout of a blog post by outgoing *Sociology of Education* editor Rob Warren expressing frustration with the state of the subfield as he had struggled during his editorship with the lack of high quality submissions to the journal. The work involved to guide some submissions to a place where they are publishable is a significant amount of the work of an editor, and trying to balance what is possible and at the same time encouraging authors to put more work into their manuscripts before submitting to a journal is difficult.

There are manuscripts that come in with significant “issues,” but also show promise and could be remediated with a little additional guidance, but this is also one reason why editors are hesitant to reject such papers and a multiple stage R&R can be created with no assurance that the paper will ever meet the standards of the journal.

In general, despite the challenges, most editors present agreed there should be more support, especially for younger authors, and that helping in this way is part of their service to the journals and the discipline.
The Committee decided to ask ASA to look into whether an Annual Meeting session or workshop on preparing manuscripts for submission and navigating the process of submission might be possible.

**Graduate Student Involvement in Journals.** The Committee discussed the issue of graduate students at institutions and whether they should, or are allowed to be, involved in the review process. It is excellent experience they might not otherwise receive, but there are also limits in what role they can play in actually making decisions or having access to confidential materials. There is some formal language about this in the ASA Publications Manual (available online). If one of the editors would be willing to lead an extended discussion, it will be added to the agenda for the Committee’s meeting in December.

Editors were excused with the appreciation of the Committee, which entered Executive Session.

**Executive Session.**

The Committee voted to:

- Approve the meeting agenda.
- Approve a proposal from the editors of the *American Sociological Review* to add a question to their submission site asking each submitting author to:
  - Confirm that the submitted manuscript is significantly different from work you (or your coauthors) have published, or have in press or under review at another journal, and that any prior work you have done directly related to the current submission has been appropriately cited and discussed in the text in a way that does not reveal your identity to reviewers.
- Appoint subcommittees to conduct routine reviews and to ensure an adequate pool of applicants for the next editors of *Contexts*, the Rose Series, and *Social Psychology Quarterly*.
- Modify letters of invitation for ASA editorships to include a statement of support for alternative models of funding within the limitations of the existing budget structure.
- Approve a recommendation from the Joint Committee on the Future of *Contexts* to add language to the call for *Contexts* editor applications to require candidates to address (1) how they would produce and direct readers to web-only content to supplement the magazine; (2) how they would encourage the press, policymakers, and the public to access open articles on the *Contexts* website; and (3) to provide their ideas for, once during their editorship, to edit a reader to be used in generalist undergraduate courses.
• Ask outgoing ASA Secretary Mary Romero to work with Karen Gray Edwards, ASA Director of Publications and Membership, to revise the proposed new guidelines on section sponsorships of books/book series for the December 2016 meeting of the Committee.

• Approve a recommendation from the Joint Committee on the Future of Contexts to recommend proceeding with negotiating a new Contexts agreement with SAGE to include opening all Contexts content one year after publication, expanding marketing to non-members, and escalating efforts to get issues into bookstores.

• Propose sessions/workshops at each Annual Meeting focused on (1) applying for an ASA editorship (focused on upcoming editorships), (2) reviewing, and (3) navigating the submission process.

• Appoint members of the new Standing Committee on the Publications Portfolio (David Takeuchi, chair, with members Jennifer Glick and Quincy Thomas Stewart). This new committee is charged with reporting each December on gaps in the existing portfolio and making recommendations for change.

• Approve nominations for new editorial board members for ASA journals and the Rose Series.

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.