Discussions/Actions from the August 9, 2009 Meeting of the ASA Committee on Publications

Elected members present were Neil Fligstein, Patricia Hill Collins (ASA President), Patricia Yancey Martin, Cecilia Ridgeway, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey (ASA Secretary), Christine Williams (Chair), Amy Wharton, Howard Winant, and Robert Zussman (who was observing since his official term starts after this meeting).

Editors present for the open session were: Julia Adams, David Bills, Tony Brown, Gary Alan Fine, Liz Grauerholz, Neil Gross, Douglas Hartmann, Larry Isaac, Tim Futig Liao, Kathleen Lowney, Alan Sica, and Chris Uggen.

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).

The Committee voted to:

- Collaborate with the National Science Foundation to publish occasional reports from workshops on cutting edge research topics
- Recommend to Council continuation of Contexts through 2013, and to develop a request for proposals for a new publishing partner
- Establish new criteria for sections to propose journals
- Publish journal acceptance rates for ASA journals with clarification about how they are formulated
- Approve nominations for new editorial board members

ASA and NSF collaboration. The National Science Foundation provides grants for workshops for sociologists to develop new and cutting-edge agendas for research. The reports from the workshops are now published online only, resulting in fewer readers. NSF proposed collaboration with ASA for publication of selected printed volumes, with copyright to be held by ASA. The volumes will be distributed through the ASA bookstore, and funded through a research grant. The first proposed volume is from a workshop on sociological perspectives in global climate change.

Selection of ASA Editors. The Committee began the editor selection process for the Journal of Health and Social Behavior and Social Psychology Quarterly. The current editors' terms end in 2010. The Committee compiled lists of candidates who will receive letters of invitation; there will also be an open announcement in Footnotes and on the ASA website for self-nomination. The Committee will review applications at the December 2009 meeting and make recommendations for Council's approval.
ASA’s partnership with Sage. A Sage representative came to the Committee on Publications meeting to discuss the partnership between the two organizations. Sage has strong capacity to reach international subscribers and other institutions via consortia arrangements. There was discussion of the transition, including the development of manuscript submission sites, subscription processing, and conference calls with editorial teams and production groups.

Review and continuation of Contexts. The Committee discussed the report of the subcommittee to on the future of Contexts and the process by which the magazine should move forward beyond the initial 10-year business plan. The Committee felt the magazine was successful, but hoped that the next publishing partner could reach new audiences. The Committee discussed whether Contexts should be revenue neutral as is required by other ASA journals, or whether ASA should be willing to subsidize it. The Committee voted to recommend to Council extending Contexts for an additional three years, with the immediate development of a request for proposals for a new publishing partner in 2011.

Guidelines for proposed section journals. The Committee approved a set of new guidelines for ASA sections that want to create or adopt journals. In addition to clarification of existing guidelines on cost neutrality and viability (without risk to the health of the section), the guidelines also included a requirement that sections must have at least 500 members for the past three years in order to proposal a section journal.

Journal acceptance rates. The current formula ASA uses to report acceptance rates does not reflect the actual odds of getting published in an ASA journal, as it includes every decision (as opposed to just final decisions). At the Committee's request, Paula England wrote an article for Footnotes which proposed a new formula for acceptance rates (only include accepts and rejects, not revisions and conditional acceptances). The Committee agreed to provide both calculations when reporting acceptance rates.

Committee on Publications Open Forum. In advance of the Open Forum on journal publishing to be held the following day, the Committee discussed how best to structure the forum in order both provide the best feedback to the Committee and to provide the best value for attendees.

The Committee will meet next on December 12, 2009.