Minutes from the August 18, 2012
Meeting of the ASA Committee on Publications

Elected members present were Catherine White Berheide (ASA Secretary), Jeremy Freese, James Jasper, Peggy Levitt, Steven Vallas, Erik Olin Wright (ASA President), and Robert Zussman (Chair). Erin Kelly and Vincent Roscigno, newly elected members of the Committee, were also present as observers.

Editors present for the open session were David Bills, Judith Gerson, Neil Gross, Karen Hegtvedt, Lauren Krivo, Tim Futing Liao, Kathleen Lowney, Holly McCammon, Jodi O’Brien, Alan Sica, Arlene Stein, and Debra Umberson.

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 meeting convened at 8:40 a.m. and introductions were made.

The agenda was approved unanimously, with the expectation of reordering items as necessary based on editors’ schedules.

Report from the Chair

Zussman stated he had no issues to report this year and would leave the largest issues for the Executive Officer to discuss.

Report from the Executive Officer

Hillsman reported on the 580 boxes of manuscript files that are being stored in the ASA Archives at Penn State. The meeting packet includes a memo to Council outlining the issues related to the boxes as well as the Executive Office’s recommendation (supported by the Executive Office and Budget Committee) to destroy the boxes. The memo to Council in the meeting materials is based on conversations with the Committee earlier in the year. The final decision will come from Council, which listens to what the Committee has to say about the journals.

Due to the looming deadline from Penn State requiring the boxes to be moved or destroyed by the end of August, the Committee will need to make a recommendation to be presented to Council at its meeting.

Zussman noted that the proposal generated a fair amount of controversy. The Committee discussed the issues involved, such as information on what was actually in the boxes, which caused less interest in
preservation. The Committee determined that there were two issues—the cost of retaining the materials and the usefulness of the materials.

Sica stated that he is heavily invested in the materials since he started the archives at Penn State. He noted there are two problems. The first is a practical problem—what to do with the materials now; the second is an intellectual problem—ASA could keep the materials because copyright laws could change, the materials could be culled and stored. Destroying the files means destroying 20 years of history.

Sica proposed going to the Penn State storage site, loading the boxes onto a truck, and storing them elsewhere and paying for it until ASA determines what to do with the materials.

There was discussion on asking members for waivers to look at rejected (and therefore, uncopyrighted) papers, but Edwards pointed out that not all authors are members.

Hillsman reinforced to the Committee that ASA has no rights to the papers, we would have to ask each author specifically for permission to do something specific, not just that ASA wants to use the documents. ASA has taken a policy position that these documents are confidential—we do not know the consequences of asking in the future if reviews could be used later or going back and asking past reviewers and there is also the impact on reviewers doing a confidential review in the future.

Wright stated that the cost involved is the most pressing issue and Sica’s proposal removes cost from the table to allow time to sort through the materials. Hillsman agreed that copyright laws changing in the future is true, but the confidentiality of reviews is a matter of ethics. She appreciates Sica’s concerns and willingness to store materials, but ASA cannot let the boxes out of its ownership and public storage facilities are not safe and secure enough.

McCammon proposed digitizing the files and storing the paper files just until the digitization is complete. Hillsman said ASA does not know the cost to do that partly because we do not know how much is actually of value.

The Committee then discussed if the decision could be postponed until the Committee can figure out what to do with the files. There was concern on destroying electronic files after three years because sometimes a rejected paper is resubmitted after more than three years with a different title and not having the files available would make that easier to determine.

Report of the Secretary

Berheide referenced the distributed subscription memo and discussed institutional subscriptions versus consortia package agreements and the pricing arrangements of each. She also distributed the 2011 ASA Annual Report to the Committee.

SAGE Report
Moran briefly discussed the increase in consortia subscriptions for the ten ASA journals and then provided an update on the SAGE website and how it affects ASA journals. SAGE has launched a mobile version of its website and can now track how users are coming to its site.

Mankowski noted that SAGE has posted 33 podcasts for the ASA journals and he feels that podcasts have the most impact on generating attention for a specific article.

The SAGE representatives also discussed a new initiative that sends automated e-mails to authors, letting them know the current production stage of each accepted article.

**Teaching Sociology Extra Page Request**

Lowney is planning a *Teaching Sociology* special issue on writing for January 2013 and would like 44 additional pages as a one-time increase. Without these pages, the remaining three issues of 2013 would be one article shorter each.

**Writing Initiative Proposal**

Lowney and Jasper proposed several initiatives to improve author writing, including holding a writing workshop at future Annual Meetings. Gross stated that book publishers now hire developmental editors to do substantial rewrites to make things toward a less academic audience, but at the journals there is not even a substantive copyedit. The Committee discussed the changes in copyediting since moving the journals to SAGE and noted that foreign submissions frequently require significant rewrites.

Edwards and Hillsman pointed out that while journals need stronger copyeditors, it is also true that authors need to improve their writing skills. It troubling that many submissions to upper-tier journals have good content, but very poor writing. Potential workshops at the Annual Meeting need to be proposed to the Program Committee; it should be addressed through professional education programs at the Annual Meeting, and made known to Department Chairs and Directors of Graduate Studies.

Sica stated that if ASA said writing interestingly and well is important and passed the message on to the graduate departments, it could help to solve the problem. Berheide suggested having two workshops each year—one on how to get published and one on writing.

The committee informally agreed that it is unnecessary to create a prize to be given specifically for good writing. The group discussed but did not come to a consensus about whether there should be a publicized effort, perhaps called the Sociology Writing Initiative, that would have several linked components, or whether several separate pieces would suffice.

Jasper agreed to send a memo to Hillsman and Berheide to request that a session be added to the 2013 program on improving writing.

**Book Proposal on Global Climate Change**
Edwards reviewed the ASA Task Force on Sociology and Global Climate Change’s proposal to publish its report. This can either be an ASA publication (where ASA owns the copyright) or a publication sponsored by ASA (with the copyright owned by publisher).

Hillsman noted that ASA Council will see the entire volume. The Committee does not endorse the content, instead it will determine if the prospectus is appropriate for a volume. The authors will seek a publisher and ASA will assist in negotiating a contract.

If the Committee feels it is a useful publication and feels the Task Force should proceed, Council could decide it should be an ASA publication or instead be an ASA-sponsored publication. If the Committee feels strongly about one option, it should recommend that to Council. When the Task Force was formed, ASA Council agreed that part of the Task Force’s duties would be to publish a volume of its findings.

Editor Selection Guidelines

The Committee reviewed the new editor selection guidelines, which required applicants to submit a one-page anonymous vision statement with their application that would be posted online for review and comment by ASA members. There was a discussion on what should happen if there is one applicant or zero applicants; the Committee deferred any decision on that until if and when that happened.

Study of Review Times

Zussman reviewed a memo from the Ad Hoc Committee on Manuscript Review Times presented to ASA Council and discussed the Committee on Publications Subcommittee’s responses.

The Committee discussed making Publishing Options a free benefit to members, while keeping it still available for purchase for anyone else.

There was discussion among Committee members to state that some editors are currently sending letters of appreciation to good reviewers. The editors of the American Sociological Review invite great reviewers to join the editorial board and feel they already have a positive feedback system in place. The Committee also discussed the possibility of developing a template letter for assistant professors to ask if a letter praising the good review could go directly to the dean.

Zussman suggested a workshop for journal editors where ASA journal editors are present and Berheide said she will see if it can be added for 2013. The Committee ultimately decided it would not be involved in the Ad Hoc Committee’s plans but would do other things to make review times more visible (e.g., Publishing Options free for members and making the ASA journal editors’ report tables more visible on the ASA website).

Nominations for New Editors

The Committee nominated possible candidates for the next editors of the Journal of Health and Social Behavior and Sociology of Education. Subcommittees were established to ensure an adequate pool of
candidates for each editorship. The Subcommittee for the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* is Kelly (chair), Levitt, and Umberson. The Subcommittee for *Sociology of Education* is Vallas (chair), Roscigno, and Bills.

**Website Proposal**

Zussman presented a proposal to start an ASA blog that is not written by the ASA Executive Office; instead the blog would be more like the blogs hosted on the Society Pages at the University of Minnesota. Vallas stated that sociology blogging needs more attention and that sections should be more involved.

Freese noted that blogs are something private enterprise or entrepreneurs do really well. The blog would allow the opportunity for a section or working group that has interest to take part and then a collection of blogs could become a group like the Society Pages.

Zussman proposed forming a subcommittee to look into developing a blog.

**Editorial Honoraria**

Edwards provided an overview of the memo distributed to the Committee, noting that the honoraria amounts have been same for 30 years. Berheide wondered if there was a way to measure what the honoraria should be based on certain factors (e.g., number of journal pages, editor’s loss of additional sources of income). Lia stated that even doubling or tripling the current amounts may not draw in editors; instead it might be better deal for institutions to receive funds for course release. The Committee discussed the possibility of giving honoraria as support to the institution and decided to propose a subcommittee to review honoraria (Gerson, Jasper).

**ASA Publications Manual**

Chiappa McKenna asked the Committee members to review the Publications Manual and provide feedback and any possible changes for the revised edition, which should be voted on at the December 2012 meeting. Once the Manual is approved, it will be posted online for editors to access. The Committee discussed making it freely available for anyone to access, not just editors.

**Issues in Open Access**

Chiappa McKenna presented a memo on open access and how it relates to ASA publications, including how previously posted versions of manuscripts make getting media coverage difficult. There was also a discussion on providing authors with toll-free links to their articles, which they could post on a personal website or institutional repository.

The SAGE representatives discussed SAGE Choice (its open access publishing model) and how NIH-funded articles can use grant funds to pay for SAGE Choice rather than a traditional publishing model.

**Action Items**

The Committee voted to:
• Recommend to Council to destroy archived manuscripts at Penn State: five yes, one abstention, carried. (Council decided not to immediately destroy boxes of old editorial office files that are ineligible for inclusion in the ASA Archives at Penn State; materials will be moved to a secure location pending policy decisions about destruction and/or securing permissions to enable continued archiving.)
• Recommend to Council to keep electronic manuscript materials for ten years instead of three years: carried unanimously.
• Recommend to Council to approve 44 extra pages for the January 2013 issue of Teaching Sociology: carried unanimously.
• Endorse publishing the report of the Task Force on Sociology and Global Climate Change: carried unanimously.
• Form a subcommittee to explore an ASA blog: carried unanimously.
• Form a subcommittee to propose a writing initiative: carried unanimously.
• Form a subcommittee to review honoraria amounts: carried unanimously.
• Update editor selection guidelines to include text on applicants including an anonymous one-page vision statement to be posted online for member review and comment: carried unanimously.
• Approve editorial board nominations: Five yes, one no, carried. The Committee discussed lack of diversity of some boards and at the December meeting will point out again the importance of diversity and focus on boards that are not diverse, which will give editors the ability to add more diverse members in August 2013.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m. The Committee will next meet on December 8 and 9, 2012.