Application for Editorship of Journal of Health and Social Behavior
Submitted to the ASA Committee on Publications
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VISION STATEMENT
Journal of Health & Social Behavior (JHSB) is an exemplary journal, publishing innovative, rigorous and theoretically informed research on health, health behaviors, health care, and policy. Its 2020 impact factor (4.462) ranks among the highest of the ASA journals, and its acceptance rate (6.2%) is very competitive, reflecting the growing number of high-quality submissions to the journal. Given these strengths, the journal does not require reinvention. As editor, I would work with a team of deputy editors to uphold the journal’s excellence, and introduce several new innovations to enhance the visibility, inclusiveness, and impact of the journal. We would focus on six main goals: (1) maintain an emphasis on core areas of medical sociology, while prioritizing emerging topics and methods; (2) uphold and enhance the timeliness and relevance of journal content; (3) build a diverse pipeline of authors, reviewers, and editorial board members; (4) ensure a rapid, respectful, and constructive experience for authors and reviewers; (5) heighten journal visibility through strategic outreach; and (6) increase replicability, rigor, and transparency.

1. Maintain an emphasis on core questions in medical sociology, while also prioritizing emerging topics and methods. The journal is recognized for publishing innovative research that is theoretically grounded, and uses high quality data and rigorous methods. We would maintain this tradition, publishing work in core areas like social determinants of health, stress and coping, stigma, biosocial intersections, life course influences, and health care delivery. To advance the core of the field, we may invite 2-3 authors of highly influential JHSB articles to revisit and update their work. The invited articles would serve as the foundation of a special issue, including empirical and theoretical expansions from authors submitting to an open call.

We will also prioritize and encourage submissions using innovative methods (e.g., network and data science approaches, digital ethnography), international and cross-national work, and timely substantive areas. The latter may be driven by the submissions we receive and emerging health concerns, although we anticipate such areas might include: the politics of health (mis)information and policy; long-term implications of COVID-19; environmental justice and health; systemic racism and health; chronic pain; cognitive health; and challenges facing the health and long-term care work forces. We are committed to expanding coverage of health disparities research, including inequalities on the basis of race, immigrant status, sexual orientation and gender identity, urban/rural status, and more.

2. Uphold and enhance the timeliness and impact of journal content. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of sociological insights into global health challenges, and the urgent need for rapid research. These lessons motivate two proposed innovations at JHSB.

   • Establish Brief Report option. The brief report (3,000 words, 2 tables/figures) option would allow authors to quickly share results from newly collected data, with a greater emphasis on results and reduced emphasis on theoretical framing. The shorter manuscript length would allow a very short deadline for reviewers, reducing the time between submission and publication. We
anticipate a modest fraction of journal space dedicated to Brief Reports, as not to detract from
the larger journal mission of theoretical development.

- Expand the Policy Brief platform to include a Practice/Translation Brief option, for manuscripts
  with clear implications for clinical practice, medical education, or disease management.

3. **Build a diverse pipeline of authors and reviewers.** Our team is committed to including diverse voices
and approaches in the journal, and building a pipeline of reviewers who may progress through the ranks
from editorial board member to future editors. Strategies include:

- Invite panelists from relevant ASA, Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), and ASA Minority
  Fellowship Program (MFP) sponsored sessions and roundtables to submit their work to *JHSB*.

- Issue an open call for nominations (including self-nominations) for editorial board membership,
  to engage scholars who may lack advantageous professional networks.

- Establish a reviewer-in-training program. Editorial board members and reviewers would be
  invited to enlist a postdoc, advanced graduate student, or students in their medical sociology or
  writing seminars as co-reviewer(s) on manuscripts. Both would receive journal
  acknowledgement for their review.

- Do outreach to international associations (e.g., RC15 Sociology of Health) and networks (e.g.,
  Sociology of Global Health interest group), to raise visibility of *JHSB* among authors and
  potential reviewers outside the United States.

4. **Ensure a rapid, respectful, and constructive experience for authors and reviewers.** Journal editors are
ambassadors of ASA, and must maintain productive relationships with their constituents – including
authors whose work is rejected and reviewers whose decision recommendations are not heeded. Timely
decisions and efficient production are especially critical to junior scholars on the tenure track. To this
end, our team would:

- Continue the use of desk rejects, with a target of 25-30%. We would provide at least one
  paragraph of constructive feedback to help authors reshape their paper, and would make
  recommendations for alternative journals.

- Provide clear syntheses of reviewer comments, justification for decision, and (for resubmission
  invitations) clear timelines and style guidelines in decision letters.

- Make decisions based on two reviews when their recommendations are concordant, rather than
  await a third tardy review.

- Send R&Rs to original reviewers only (when possible), rather than bring in a new reviewer late
  in the review process.

- Develop and disseminate guidelines for writing constructive reviews and responsive revisions.

5. **Heighten journal visibility through strategic outreach.** Increasing the journal’s impact factor is a
critical goal, yet other metrics of impact such as media coverage (as indicated by Altmetrics) also are
important. Among the strategies we will use to raise awareness of *JHSB* publications are:

- Appoint a Social Media Editor, who would use and expand on current ASA and SAGE-provided
  platforms including Twitter, podcasts, and video interviews to publicize journal articles.

- Create curated lists of thematically-related articles to be posted on journal website and
  disseminated to relevant ASA sections (e.g., papers on incarceration and health sent to Crime,
  Law and Deviance section) and related professional organizations like Interdisciplinary
  Association for Population Health (IAHPS) or Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM).
• Provide resources to authors to promote their own work via social media and their university press offices.
• Identify and nominate papers/authors as candidates for SAGE Perspectives research blog.

6. Increase replicability, rigor, and transparency. We hope to align JHSB’s practices with current publications standards, such as encouraging authors to archive and share deidentified data, and use online appendices to share materials like programming code and study protocols, consistent with COPE best practices.

EDITORIAL TEAM INFORMATION

Expertise of Editor in Chief (EIC) Applicant
I am professor of sociology and director of the Center for Innovation in Social Science (CISS) at Boston University. I am a medical sociologist who uses population-based surveys and draws on social psychological theories to explore life course influences on later-life health and well-being. My research has examined topics including: the effects of socioeconomic attainments on mental health; the physical and mental health consequences of stress, with a particular emphasis on bereavement and family dissolution; end-of-life decision making and advance care planning; the psychosocial implications of disability; and the stigmatization of health conditions including obesity and physical disability. I am the (co)author or editor of ten books, including *Golden Years? Social Inequality in Later Life*, which received the 2020 Kalish Innovative Publication Award from the Gerontological Society of America. I have published more than 100 peer reviewed journal articles, with this work appearing in top-tier medical sociology journals including *JHSB* (where I have published 11 articles), and *Social Science and Medicine*, as well as other flagship and generalist journals including *Annual Review of Sociology, Social Psychology Quarterly, Social Forces*, and more. I have published several dozen chapters in edited volumes, as well as op-eds and blogs geared for general audiences. According to Google Scholar, my work has been cited more than 14,500 times (h-index = 58). I have been an advisor or investigator on major surveys of health and aging, and am principal investigator of National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). I chaired the ASA Medical Sociology and Sociology of Aging and Life Course (SALC) sections, and have served on ASA publication and distinguished scholar award committees.

I am fortunate to have obtained extensive experience as an editor. I was an editorial board member under three past editors of *JHSB*. I was trends editor of *Contexts*, a deputy editor of *Social Psychology Quarterly*, and a deputy editor under three different editors at *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Most recently, I was editor-in-chief of *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* (a flagship journal of the Gerontological Society of America) where I served a three-year term (2015-18) and a two-year extension at the request of GSA (2018-20). During my five-year term, the number of annual submissions increased from 280 to over 500, the impact factor increased from 2.813 to 4.077, and average decision time dropped dramatically, to less than 60 days for reviewed manuscripts and fewer than five days for desk rejects. I also increased the diversity of the editorial board, with respect to race/ethnicity, nation, and substantive and methodological expertise. I also appointed a Social Media editor who established and managed the journal’s Twitter and other social media accounts. The strategies I used to improve the journal’s visibility, time to decision, and impact have prepared me to edit *JHSB*. 
Deputy Editors
I have invited six colleagues to serve as the initial team of deputy editors (DE); all six have enthusiastically agreed to serve if our application is accepted. All are located in Boston, allowing regular in-person meetings to discuss journal goals and operations. Each member of the DE team brings distinctive expertise that fills a core or emerging area in medical sociology, or an area that has historically occupied little space in JHSB and has potential for expanded coverage. Appointing DEs with specific areas of expertise in global health, network analysis, and qualitative methods, in particular, will send a strong signal to potential authors who might not have previously considered JHSB a plausible home for their work.

Wen Fan (Department of Sociology, Boston College). Dr. Fan is a leading scholar of work-family intersections and health, and the impacts of macrosocial conditions on health. Her work focuses on both the U.S., and China. She was on the JHSB editorial board from 2018-2020. Dr. Fan will serve as DE on manuscripts focused on work-family and macrosocial influences on health, and quantitative approaches to global health. She will also serve as decision editor on manuscripts submitted by Boston University faculty and graduate students, to circumvent conflicts of interest.

Neha Gondal (Department of Sociology and Faculty for Computing and Data Sciences, Boston University). Dr. Gondal uses cutting-edge social network methods to understand health and health behaviors, including the spread of COVID-19, and the diffusion of health behaviors among persons living in public housing. She is an associate editor of Simulation and has served on the editorial boards of American Sociological Review, Social Networks, and other prominent journals. Dr. Gondal will serve as DE on manuscripts employing network and data science approaches.

Joseph Harris (Department of Sociology and Global Development Policy Center, Boston University). Dr. Harris is a prominent scholar of global health and health policy, who has served as an Associate Editor at Social Science & Medicine, and is an editorial board member of journals including Health System and Reform. Dr. Harris will serve as DE and decision editor on manuscripts focused on global health, health care systems, and professions.

Tiffany Joseph (Department of Sociology and Institute for Health Equity and Social Justice Research, Northeastern University). Dr. Joseph is recognized for her qualitative work exploring health disparities, and how public policies exacerbate health disadvantages for immigrant and minoritized populations. She is/has been an editorial board member of Contemporary Sociology and Ethnic and Racial Studies. Dr. Joseph will serve as DE on manuscripts using qualitative methods and focused on U.S. health policy.

Sara Moorman (Department of Sociology, Boston College). Dr. Moorman is a life course sociologist who has published widely on death and dying, and early-life influences on adulthood health with a focus on cognitive health and dementia. She has been on the editorial board of journals including Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, Journal of Marriage and Family, and Research on Aging. Dr. Moorman will serve as DE on manuscripts focused on cognitive health, early life influences, and dyadic approaches. She will also serve as decision editor on manuscripts submitted by Boston University faculty and graduate students, to circumvent conflicts of interest.

Andrew Stokes (School of Public Health and Department of Sociology, Boston University). Dr. Stokes is a prolific scholar who applies demographic techniques to population health, focusing on social determinants of health over the life course. His experience as a sociologist on the faculty at a top public health school also may help to attract submissions from other SPH scholars. Dr. Stokes will serve as DE on a subset of manuscripts using quantitative approaches to examine social factors in health, one of the largest areas of JHSB submissions. He will also serve as decision editor on manuscripts submitted by Dr. Carr’s current/recent collaborators and mentees, to circumvent conflicts of interest.
The EIC will oversee decisions for about two-thirds of all submissions, and will assign the remaining submissions to the DEs, based on area of expertise. The DEs will: (1) suggest reviewers; (2) draft decision letters; (3) recommend decisions on manuscripts; (4) oversee revision process, as needed; (5) provide consultation to EIC as needed; (6) nominate forthcoming manuscripts for media attention and press releases; and (7) suggest candidates for editorial board membership. I will provide mentorship to DEs, and have prepared documents that provide guidelines for writing decision letters and other responsibilities, thus contributing to the pipeline of future ASA EICs.

**Editorial Board Members**

Editorial Board (EB) members will be selected from nominations (including self-nominations) with an eye toward maintaining diversity with respect to substantive area and method, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. EB candidates will be recruited from published authors in *JHSB*, those presenting work at ASA annual meeting sessions focused on health/medicine, reviewing the list of advanced alumni from programs like the ASA MFP, and accessing the journal’s ScholarOne database to identify reviewers rated by the current editorial team as constructive and timely. EB members will: (1) review no more than six manuscripts per year, (2) provide consultation on practices to enhance the journal’s reputation and impact factor, and (3) suggest new reviewers and EB members. They also will be invited to engage their graduate students and postdoctoral fellows as ‘reviewers-in-training.’

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)**

We will uphold the journal’s commitment to DEI in three main ways: (1) prioritizing research focused on exploring health disparities, focusing on marginalized populations within and beyond the U.S.; (2) developing journal guidelines for inclusive person-centered language, following the lead of *AMA, GSA* and other journals; and (3) developing a diverse pool of reviewers and editorial board members, thereby contributing to the future pipeline of ASA journal DEs and EICs. Appointing a DE (Joseph Harris) dedicated to global health research and a DE who has published extensively on health in China (Wen Fan) may help recruit authors and reviewers who are from the Global South and who do research on countries beyond the journal’s traditional emphasis on North America and Europe. This will help widen the journal’s readership and authorship and may promote opportunities to apply concepts and test theories in more diverse contexts, leading to greater cross-fertilization of ideas. We also will propose to ASA’s Publication Committee waiving article submission fees for authors from low-income countries, a practice currently extended to graduate student authors.

**INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

BU’s sociology department has a strong medical sociology training program, and is bolstered by faculty members in related schools and departments including Public Health and Medicine. BU’s Center for Innovation in Social Science (CISS) serves as the coordinator for Boston-Area Health Scholars, a group which unifies health researchers from throughout the greater Boston area who meet regularly to present new works in progress, hold professional development workshops, and discuss cutting-edge issues at the intersection of social sciences and health research. This community provides a potential pool of peer reviewers, and graduate students who are candidates for the journal’s managing editor position.

Our department and university enthusiastically support bringing *JHSB* to BU, and have committed key resources to facilitate the editorship, as outlined in the accompanying letters from Japonica Brown-Saracino (Sociology department chair) and Nazli Kibria (associate dean for the Social Sciences Faculty). CISS, supported by the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), will provide office space for journal
operations and a computer for our graduate student managing editor. CISS will also provide administrative staff support to manage accounting, disbursements, and the JHSB budget. The Sociology department will support the graduate student managing editor’s attendance at and travel to the ASA annual meeting. CISS will provide an advanced undergraduate editorial intern, who will assist the managing editor, and develop curated reading lists to help publicize JHSB publications.