Proposal for Editorship of *Sociological Methodology*

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**Vision Statement**

We recognize the considerable opportunity afforded by the call for applications for the editorship of *Sociological Methodology* (*SM*). As the only ASA periodical devoted entirely to research methods, *SM* plays an important role in the discipline, and it holds a coveted position among sociology journals. As a journal that cuts across all sub-disciplinary divides, it is one of the most significant journals representing the discipline of sociology, and indeed, it is prominent across the social sciences with respect to its impact factor. Thus, although ASA has a section dedicated to Methodology, the journal’s reach is beyond any one section given the nature of its topic. As methodologists, we consider editing *SM* to be a central career goal. However, we also acknowledge the scholarly giants of methodology who have previously edited the journal. Thus, we recognize the great responsibility bestowed upon the next editors with regard to proper stewardship of this venue for scholarly excellence.

We consider now to be an exciting time to become editors of *SM*. Buttressed by gains in technology, we anticipate changes in computing, statistical theory, and qualitative research in the next decade that will make *SM* critical to these ongoing conversations. The digital age of research has already resulted in countless methodological innovations – from the lexical and text analysis that was unfathomable just a few decades ago to big data applications in trace data – we envision *SM* as a venue for both methodological innovations in the digital age and advances for more traditional sociological methodology.

Below, we detail our editorial vision for *SM* as the leading forum for influential, high impact sociological methodology scholarship, and our goals for our possible term as co-editors.

**Goals and Opportunities**

Based on our experiences with *SM*—as well as our careful review of annual editorship reports—it is evident that current Editor Duane Alwin will be leaving *SM* in strong shape for the new editorial team to take over. Given this situation, we will strive to maintain *SM*’s upward trajectory in terms of submissions, stature, and impact, by focusing on several areas:

1. **Ensure the best methods papers are published in ASA’s methods journal, *SM*.** *SM* and *Sociological Methods & Research* (*SMR*) are the two most well-known generalist sociological methods journals. We understand that the two journals have a shared history in terms of its founding editors and subsequent editorial teams. Although their mission statements may be somewhat different, they undoubtedly attract (or have the potential to attract) many of the same articles. Thus, in some respects, *SMR* is direct competition. In fact, *SMR*’s impact factor has increased from a low of 1.524 in 2011 to a high of 3.625 in 2017, sitting only below *Annual Review of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *American Journal of Sociology* among all sociology journals. We even occasionally hear from sociologists, who do not necessarily publish methodological articles, that they thought *SMR* was an ASA journal. Our goal then is to make *SM* the first journal to which methodologists submit, ensuring that *SM*, rather than *SMR*, has the opportunity to publish the most important and cited articles. It is important to us that such
articles appear in the ASA’s methods journal, rather than a competitor. We also consider other non-generalist journals that publish some methods articles (e.g. Social Networks, Qualitative Research, Ethnography, Journal of Quantitative Criminology) to be potential competitors whose best methods articles may be appropriate for SM. In general, then, outreach will comprise one of our main goals, and several of the points that follow are designed to do just that.

2. Utilize the ASA meetings to increase SM’s profile. We will use the ASA meetings to enhance SM by promoting the journal to sections. For example, we will both make announcements in our respective sections during the business meetings encouraging methodologically focused submissions.

3. Increase SM’s social media and online presence, including reaching non-methodologists. While we have emphasized outreach to get the best possible papers published in SM, we also emphasize the need to reach the audience who will then use (and cite) the papers in SM. In this respect then, the journal needs to reach beyond just those who self-identify as methodologists. While reaching out to ASA sections will partially accomplish this goal, we also emphasize the need to use other forms of communication, including social media, to reach sociologists more broadly. To our knowledge, SM has neither a Facebook page nor a Twitter profile. This absence is in stark contrast to most other ASA journals. This is unfortunate, as these mediums offer wonderful opportunities for engaging with potential readers and interested academic and non-academic audiences. This outreach could increase the use of the methodological breakthroughs published in SM. Thus, we believe social media can be a platform to encourage awareness and readership of SM papers within and beyond the discipline. Finally, given that SM is only published annually, we will continue its tradition of quickly pushing articles to Online Early, so that researchers can have immediate access to articles that may be helpful to their work.

4. Add SM to the Social Science, Mathematical Methods Index in ISI’s Journal Citation Reports. We believe that getting the journal indexed in this category within Journal Citation Reports (JCR) would improve its reach (note that SMR is indexed in this category, as well as lesser ranked sociology methods journals such as the Journal of Mathematical Sociology). As many scientists look to these indexes when considering where to publish, this index would provide SM with exposure for those who might not otherwise skim the Sociology index when considering where to publish their methods-related article. While such a change is not directly within our control, we will attempt to work with JCR towards the inclusion of this important sociology journal within this index. Notably, JHSB was successful in adding the journal to another index under the current editorial team, such that this appears as a doable goal.

5. Enhance the review process and improve submissions. We will strive to maintain the excellent review times under Editor Alwin, while making improvements where possible. First, we will, like the current editor, initially determine if the fit and quality warrants a paper being sent out for review. With two co-editors, we believe we can lower the 3.3 week average for a rejection without review. Additionally, part of our outreach will entail emphasizing what articles are an appropriate fit for SM and, as importantly, which are not. This knowledge may decrease those papers not sent out for review due to inappropriate fit. Second, we will seek to decrease the 13.7 week review time for papers invited to resubmit.

6. Finally, continue SM’s legacy of publishing cutting edge methodological advances, not only in quantitative methodology, but with renewed focus on advances in qualitative
research methods and mixed methods. We want SM to be the first place that sociologists and other social scientists go when they want to know the latest developments in methodology across all methodological and disciplinary divides. The fruit bared by our above goals will hopefully result in increased quality submissions that address innovation in a variety of methodological approaches. We believe this is an especially exciting time for both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In terms of quantitative research, the availability of Bayesian approaches and big data, for example, make this an exciting time for quantitative methodology. At the same time, machine learning approaches applied to textual data and sensing technology applied to interactional data, for example, enables innovations in qualitative methodology.

Co-Editor Background Information

We are applying as joint co-editors who have a successful track record of scholarly achievements that lend themselves to substantial experience to lead the journal. Together, we have produced over 75 publications in outstanding sociology, subfield, and interdisciplinary journals, and, of course, many methods-focused articles. Furthermore, we have served as reviewers for dozens of different journals, have editorial experience, and serve as funding agency review panelists. Hence, we have extensive, first-hand knowledge of evaluating sociology broadly and methods specifically. Fitting with our identities as sociological methodologists, we both moved mid-career to Ohio State in 2015 as the inaugural group of faculty in a new interdisciplinary group now known as the Translational Data Analytics Institute (TDAI). While we share the common view of ourselves as methodologists, we believe that the co-editorship will be especially fruitful given our divergent methodological expertise. Together we cover a broad swath of sociological methods that will be advantageous in our editorial practices, as we complement each other well.

Michael Vuolo is Associate Professor of Sociology at The Ohio State University, where he also has faculty affiliations with TDAI, the Criminal Justice Research Center, and the Institute for Population Research. While working on his PhD in Sociology, Michael also attained separate Master’s degrees in both Statistics and Mathematics. Undoubtedly, the depth and breadth of this training will allow us as editors to efficiently and accurately evaluate the underlying mathematics of submissions to SM. Naturally, this background has led to numerous methods focused articles. In addition to publishing twice in SMR, other methods related articles have also appeared in Demography and Social Psychology Quarterly. (For transparency, David and Michael currently have a co-authored article at SM in revise and resubmit status.) Across this background and publication record, Michael is an expert in methods such as field experiments, mixed effects modeling, categorical data analysis, longitudinal methods, and mixed methodology, as well as programming in R, Stata, and C#.

Beyond methodology, Michael’s program of research focuses on crime, law and deviance, health, work, and the life course. His research has been funded through numerous grants from the NIH, NSF, and the Fulbright Commission. Many of these grants have contained aims that seek to improve methodology, both quantitative and qualitative. In fact, the Fulbright grant was based entirely on learning the data collection, harmonization, and analysis techniques of the European Union’s central drug data collection agency.
Michael has been a member of the ASA’s Section on Methodology for as long as he has been a member of ASA, while also actively involved in several other sections (especially Crime, Law, and Deviance and Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco). Since the *American Sociological Review* moved to Notre Dame in 2016, Michael has served as Deputy Editor. Thus, he has considerable editorial experience, acting as lead editor for articles where conflicts of interest existed, being brought in to adjudicate where reviewers disagreed, and otherwise acting as a reviewer in many instances. Notably, he was very often brought in to evaluate methodology. He also serves on the editorial board of *Social Science Research*, and is scheduled to rotate on to the editorial board of *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* when the Deputy Editor term at ASR ends in December.

Importantly, Michael also has a strong commitment to qualitative methods and mixed methodology. Of his articles, seven utilize a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach, several stemming from a NIH grant that used ethnography, survey methods, and in-depth interviews. Three articles also exclusively utilize qualitative methods, including one based on a prison ethnography he conducted. In ongoing research, his current NSF grant relies solely on in-depth interview methods with 140 persons with criminal records, including a baseline and six-month follow-up. Thus, while having an exceptionally strong quantitative background, Michael also has considerable experience with qualitative methods that will enhance the editorial team’s ability to assess the full breadth of sociological methodology.

David Melamed is Associate Professor of Sociology at The Ohio State University, where he also has faculty affiliations with TDAI, the Criminal Justice Research Center, and the Mershon Center for International Security Studies. He is also Faculty-in-Residence as a Co-Leader of the Computational Social Science Community of Practice within TDAI. In this capacity David works with TDAI affiliates to promote team data science, engaging with cutting-edge methodologists from across campus. Starting with network analysis in graduate school, David has been engaged in methodological development throughout his career. His methodological work has appeared in *SMR, Connections, Social Networks, Research in the Sociology of Work, PLOS ONE, and Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*. He is also preparing a methodology manuscript for submission to *Cambridge University Press*. Through this work, David has demonstrated expertise in network methods, (generalized) linear (mixed) models, laboratory experiments, categorical data analysis, and simulation techniques, as well as programming in Python, R, and Stata.

In addition to methodological work, David’s research concentrates on social psychology, social networks, and prosocial behavior. The Army Research Office, the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Administration (IARPA), and NSF have supported his work. Like Professor Vuolo’s grant profile, many of these projects are either focused on methodology (e.g., IARPA), or have elements of methodological innovation (e.g., his current ARO grant). The IARPA project, for example, entails a series of simulation studies to evaluate methodological developments aimed at predicting rare events.

David has also been a member of the ASA’s Section on Methodology since he was a graduate student, in addition to his involvement with the Mathematical Sociology and Social Psychology sections. In terms of editorial work, David served as a board member for *Advances in Group Processes* and *Social Psychology Quarterly*. The publications committee approved David to join the Editorial Board of *American Sociological Review* in 2019. He was also an
Associate Editor for *Social Justice Research* for three years, acting as deciding Editor on many submissions. Accordingly, he has the requisite experience to shepherd submissions through the publication process.

While most of David’s research is quantitative, he uses and appreciates qualitative approaches. Currently he is engaged in textual analysis of the Web of Science, coding themes and patterns in the author profiles and citations. Further, he has experience as a team member completing case studies of organizations that did not fit predictive models. Thus, both co-editors have clear strengths in quantitative methodology and are regular users of qualitative methodology.

**Editorial Board:** While we think of ourselves as having expertise to cover many facets of sociological methods, we recognize that we cannot expect to have the expertise for all submitted articles. Here, we will rely on an editorial board that can both complement and add to our expertise. Traditionally, *SM* typically does not have Deputy Editors. While we expect to continue as such, we remain open to adding a Deputy Editor if a hole in our expertise and the need for outside help becomes apparent. We will ensure that our editorial board includes both quantitative and qualitative scholars that we can rely upon as knowledgeable reviewers.

**Structure of the Editorial Office and Process**

Our Editorial Office will be comprised of two Co-Editors, a Managing Editor, and a copyeditor. This model has been used successfully by past editors of *SM* to process submitted and accepted papers. Lisa Savage, the current Managing Editor, would like to continue in that role. We would also seek to retain the current copyeditor.

As co-editors, we will jointly direct all aspects of the editorial office management procedures. These responsibilities include management of the peer-review process, identification and selection of appropriate and qualified reviewers, decisions on the manuscripts for publication based upon peer-review, interacting with staff at Sage to ensure the timely production of articles to online publication and eventual placement in a volume, promoting specific articles to various academic and policy audiences, and networking with the appropriate offices and committees of ASA. Nonetheless, we anticipate splitting the workload when it comes to specific submissions based on our methodological expertise.

**Institutional Support**

Our department and university are very excited at the prospect of us co-editing this journal and have agreed to offer generous resources to enhance our ability to successfully execute our editorial duties and achieve the outlined goals. These resources include a course release annually to provide sufficient time to devote to editorial responsibilities, space as needed, and computing and other communications infrastructure to facilitate interaction with authors, reviewers, and editorial staff. We note that our department already operates on a three-course load, such that a single course release per year is quite considerable. Both co-editors also have ample departmental resources to facilitate our mutual attendance at the Editors’ meetings. Collectively, these resources demonstrate strong institutional support for our pursuit of these editorial responsibilities.