Application for Joint Editorship of *Sociological Theory*

Vrushali Patil, Associate Professor, Florida International University  
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Omar Lizardo, Professor, UCLA  
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**Vision Statement:**
The practice of sociological theory is one of the most important sites where the vision of our discipline is articulated and where sociologists craft their disciplinary identity. In this sense, the journal *Sociological Theory*—as the premiere theory journal in the discipline—holds a significant place within the discipline as a whole. Closely following the vision of the current editor, Iddo Tavory (as outlined in his application for editorship), we each feel a strong affinity for this journal and its important history in the discipline. Each of us has been engaging with and contributing to sociological theory over the course of our careers in various capacities. While the theoretical subfields of our individual specialties spread broadly across the discipline, we share a similar vision of the practice and value of theory as a team. We believe that theory is valuable because it provides the methodological and epistemological structures that guide substantive empirical research. The best theories are those that allow us to see and appreciate the particular and unique aspects of human experience at the same time that they ‘rise above’ the particular by generating universally communicable concepts and knowledge claims.

Yet simultaneously, sociological theory as a practice is also one of the sites where many inequities in our discipline are produced and reproduced. For example, there has been a tendency to conflate ‘universal’ and ‘Western.’ To borrow a phrase from Pheng Cheah, “what belongs to the knowing subjects’ historical or cultural makeup—its ‘Western-ness’—will always be raised to the universal. And what lies on the side of the unknown (the non-Western) can only ever be the mere object of factual knowledge, rather than the subject of theory.” One of the most powerful ways such relations of power have mattered, as writers like Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberly Hoang have explained, is in terms of what gets named as theory and who gets to be called a theorist. Such processes inevitably impact what kind of work makes it into “theory” journals and what kind of work ends up elsewhere.

Indeed, it is widely recognized that the editorship of any journal signals the kinds of writing to be welcomed for publication. Accurately or not, authors follow suit and choose where to submit their work based on these presumptions. In short, representation matters. With our proposal as a team of editors with diverse scholarship and personal backgrounds, we intend to signal our support for the breadth of what has been called theory traditionally while expanding that breadth to invite topics and specialties that have not always been reflected in what gets called “theory” or what has been published in the journal. In that sense, one of our primary aims for *Sociological Theory* is to begin to reflect a larger breadth of theory work within and outside the discipline.

It is important to note that recently, *Sociological Theory* has published work on historically marginalized topics, such as gender, sexuality, race, and empire. Some critical groundwork, in this sense, has already been laid. Our editorial vision is to further build on this foundation and to continue to adequately represent what Timothy Brennan has called the “spatiotemporal
reformulation” social theory is currently undergoing. Again, this does not mean that more traditional sociological theories and modes of analysis—the best of which can often be found in the pages of *Sociological Theory*—are no longer tenable. It does mean, however, that *Sociological Theory* needs to evolve further as a venue wherein many types of theory are examined sympathetically, if also critically.

**Editor/Co-Editor Information:**

We believe that, as a team, we offer an intriguing complement of specialties across what has traditionally been deemed classical and contemporary theory, as well as inviting fresh and innovative work. We have proficiency with what the journal has traditionally published while offering fresh new directions and signaling an invitation to progressive, creative, and international scholarship. The model of editing as a team is not untested. A four-editor team housed at Yale had a successful run editing the journal in the mid-aughts. Similarly, the journal, *Sexualities*, has been using a three-editor model quite effectively for many years. Matching our own vision, each editor will be assigned submissions to individually shepherd through the editorial process. Assignments would be made by the managing editor based on sociological specialty, i.e. classical theory (Magubane and Lizardo), contemporary theory (Lizardo and Crawley), globalization (Patil and Magubane), postmodern/poststructuralist theory (Crawley and Patil). This division of labor controls the brunt of the work for any person and allows the assignment of submissions according to theoretical sub-specialty. In a journal such as *Sociological Theory*, which covers the entire breadth of the discipline with deep theoretical precision, using a team of subspecialists offers each paper submitted the added benefit of theoretical specificity, which any single editor is unlikely to be able to provide on their own. This is not a comment on the capable steering from previous editors, which we applaud. It is simply a recognition that utilizing multiple editors across specialties offers the benefit of greater depth of knowledge in many subspecialties while helping to showcase traditionally underrepresented work. Of course, all final publication decisions will rely on the input of all four editors.

It has not been typical to have a team that is not at the same university, though each at well-resourced R1, PhD granting departments. One positive outcome of the COVID pandemic is that distributing the work of the journal across four geographic locations is now as seamless as working with colleagues on the same campus. We can share files and meet virtually as easily as any four colleagues. The division of labor across four equal editors will allow us to respond, maintain, and even improve the timeliness and swift turnaround now typical of this journal. Previous editors have done an excellent job of sustaining timely feedback for papers that are sent out for review (typically around twelve weeks), which is particularly critical for early career researchers and under-represented scholars. We will build on their success while also striving to improve upon their efforts. Particularly, we believe the four-editor model should be able to shorten the time between submission and sending out for review and, for papers that are not a good fit, the time between submission and desk-reject decision. Similar to the current practices of Iddo Tavory, our plan is for each editor to be actively involved in providing authors with detailed independent feedback, not just regurgitating reviewer comments. This editorial guidance is particularly critical for authors of papers that receive an invitation to revise and resubmit, but also in cases where we decline to publish a paper. We plan to continue and further develop best editorial practices established by previous editors and the current editor in this regard.
Vrushali Patil, Associate Professor, Florida International University
I broadly write at the intersection of historical sociology, gender, and sexuality studies, and postcolonial/decolonial studies. I have written on feminist and queer theories from the perspective of racialization, coloniality and empire (see for example, my latest U of Minnesota Press monograph, Webbed Connectivities: The Imperial Sociology of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, as well as award-winning work in Sociological Theory, as well as in Signs and Ethnic and Racial Studies). I have also written on anti-racist theoretical formations (including work on racialization, coloniality, and empire) from the perspective of gender and sexuality (Theory & Society); scale (Sex Roles, Journal of Historical Sociology, Signs); space (Annals of Tourism Research, Tourism Geographies); relationality and networks (Sociological Theory); and affect, emotion, and assemblage (Ethnic and Racial Studies). In this body of work, while I have written on classical theory, I have also engaged with and against the poststructuralist and postmodern writing of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Dwelling on the border between sociology and other disciplines, I have sought to generate conversations which enrich multiple fields. I currently serve on the editorial boards of Gender and Society, Frontiers in Sociology, and Gender Issues. Demonstrating the prior support of my peers, I have been elected to Chair of the Sexualities section.

Zine Magubane, Professor, Boston College
I have been engaged in a decade-long project to ‘decolonize’ Classical Theory. I have published a number of articles which have made the case that ‘decolonizing sociology’ means offering a different way of thinking about sociology’s past in order to change the way we teach and use classical theory in the present. My reinterpretation of the sociological canon is anchored in the names and histories that all sociologists will find familiar—Comte, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. However, it challenges the commonly held view that the global power of empire went theoretically unnoticed by the makers of modern sociology. As a theorist who is deeply invested in how race and racism has structured the sociological enterprise, I have published essays in Current Sociology, Cultural Sociology, Ethnic and Racial Studies, and The Sociology of Race and Ethnicity. As a South African sociologist who also studies South Africa, I am deeply immersed in scholarly networks across the African continent and have also published a number of pieces on the intertwined histories of South African and American sociology. I have been or am currently serving on the editorial board of several journals based on the African continent such as Feminist Africa, The Journal of South African Sociology, African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal, and Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies. I served as Chair of the Global and Transnational Sociology Section (2020-2021).

Omar Lizardo, Professor, UCLA
I have had a career-long interest in classical and contemporary theory. This includes publications on the work of Durkheim on individualism (Sociological Perspectives) and collective representations (Philosophy of the Social Sciences), the work of Max Weber on ideal and material interest (European Journal of Social Theory), and probabilistic action theory (Sociological Theory). My work has also examined various conceptual issues dealing with the work of Pierre Bourdieu on habitus, cognition, reflexivity, culture, and social fields, along with interdisciplinary issues in culture and cognition studies; this work has been published in such outlets as Theory & Society, Poetics, American Journal of Cultural Sociology, Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, Sociological Forum, and Cultural Sociology. Other work published
in *Sociological Theory* deals with the nature of habit and belief from a neo-pragmatist perspective and issues in the conceptualization and theorization of cultural taste in recent empirical work on “omnivorosity.” Finally, I have published theoretical work on how best to think of distinct versions of the culture concept for purposes of substantive empirical research (*American Sociological Review*). I have had extensive editorial and reviewing experience throughout my career, having been (or currently being) a member of the editorial board of *Sociological Theory, Theory & Society, American Sociological Review, Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, Social Forces, Poetics, Social Currents,* and *Sociological Forum.* I also served as one of the lead editors of the *American Sociological Review* for a five-year term (2016-2020). I am currently one of the social scientists appointed to the board of reviewing editors at *Science,* and have previously served as Chair of the Culture Section, and Chair of the W.E.B. Du Bois Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award Committee.

S.L. Crawley, Associate Professor (and affiliated faculty in Women’s and Gender Studies), University of South Florida

My career-long interests have centered on putting interpretive sociologies, especially with regard to social psychologies and identity-making, in conversation with interdisciplinary feminist and poststructuralist theories, including having worked in the following theoretical subfields: microsociologies, dramaturgy, ethnomethodology, and pragmatism, as well as classical and contemporary feminist theories, queer theory, and comparative epistemologies. My work crosses a number of subfields and includes epistemological innovations to methodologies. I have placed two recent articles in *Sociological Theory.* I have published in *Symbolic Interaction* (forthcoming), *The Sociological Quarterly, The American Sociologist, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Cultural Studies↔Critical Methodologies, Gender & Society, Sexualities, Journal of Lesbian Studies, Feminism and Psychology,* and *Hypatia,* a coauthored monograph, *Gendering Bodies,* and multiple, well-cited invited chapters in edited collections. Some of my work has been translated to Ukrainian and Russian. Additionally, beyond reviewing for more than 20 years and more than 20 journals, I have edited a special issue of *Feminist Teacher.* More importantly, as a former Managing Editor for *Social Psychology Quarterly* (2003-2004 under the editorship of Spencer Cahill and working with Karen Grey Edwards), I understand the inner workings of a journal. I have also held the following editorial board memberships: Editorial Board Member (2005-2008 and 2014-2018) – *Social Problems;* Editorial Board Member (2007-2011) – *Gender & Society;* inaugural Editorial Board Member – *Krytyka Feministychna: East European Journal of Feminist and Queer Studies;* and Editorial Advisory Board, “Gender and Sociology” series, Policy Press, Univ of Bristol, UK. I have also served as Chair of the Sex and Gender Section, Chair of the Jessie Bernard Awards Committee, and recently was elected President-elect of Sociologists for Women in Society.

**Editorial Board:**

Our larger vision is to guide the journal toward more truly reflecting the diversity of voices that make up theorizing in sociology. Utilizing our own diverse collegial networks, we expect to strengthen *Sociological Theory’s* network of reviewers and potential editorial board members over time. We will actively tap those networks in our efforts to increase diversity. All of this of course, also advances ASA’s and the journal’s DEI goals. While this application does not ask us to secure editorial board members, here we offer a list of fresh names who might be nominated to the editorial board through the regular process of securing new board members:
Gurminder Bhambra, University of Sussex.
Manuela Boatcă, University of Freiburg.
José Itzigsohn, Brown University.
Karida L. Brown, Emory University.
Jason Ferguson, UCLA.
Ellis Monk, Harvard University.
Taylor Paige Winfield, McGill.
Natalia Ruiz-Junco, Auburn University.
Ioana Sendroiu, University of Hong Kong.
Anna K. M. Skarpelis, Berlin Social Science Center.

As a team of four editors, we do not anticipate needing to name deputy editors.

Professional Ethics and Scientific Integrity Self-Disclosure.
Of course, we each individually and collectively agree to support the code of ethics of ASA and common ethical practices of journal reviewing and scientific integrity more generally.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
Given sociological theory’s critical role in defining the discipline, its premiere theory journal has an important role to play in addressing inequity. By our count of Sociological Theory’s twelve editors, only one has been a woman. None appear to be people of color or queer or even from non-elite university settings. The composition of the journal’s editorial staff reflects the historical composition of ASA leadership. More than three-quarters of ASA presidents have been white men. While women and people of color have made up only about a quarter of ASA presidents, the vast majority of them have done so in the last two decades. These inequities reflect and shape the whole of our discipline and help reproduce harmful stereotypes as to what constitutes “theory” and who sees themselves as a “theorist” mentioned earlier. Many sociologists have written about how racial, gender, and other power relations also shape theory in our discipline (See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins, Aldon Morris, Julian Go). The articles published in Sociological Theory thus have the potential drive transformation in the discipline as a whole. The diversity we bring as an editorial team will build upon the efforts of the current editor, Iddo Tavory, to increase work from outside the sociological core of North America and Western Europe. We would further build on Iddo Tavory’s idea of inviting one paper per year from outside the sociological core—especially from the global south—which would then go through the peer-review process. Additionally, we seek to increase the number of folks from the global south and those who work on historically underrepresented areas within sociological theory—empire, race, gender, sexuality, and ability—on the editorial board. We would also seek to increase the number of such folks in terms of reviewers.

Institutional Support:
A strong inducement for our application as potential editors is the steady, professional, and long-standing managing editorship of Joe Weibe, already established for Sociological Theory. Given the capable hands of the current managing editor and copyediting functions, we intend to make no changes. Indeed, the well-developed professionalism of these functions leaves us confident that our tasks as editors will focus on the intellectual workings of the editorial work. As such, we are not submitting a detailed budget or plan for setting up a managing editorial office.
Dr. Patil has secured support from her Dean for a course release to do this work (as you can see from the accompanying letter). Drs. Magubane, Crawley, and Lizardo are working on similar support, which will be more effectively negotiated if we are offered the editorship.