Proposal for the Co-Editorship of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*
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Introduction

Growth. When we think about the mission and impact of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity (SRE)*, that is the word that we come back to most often. Since its inaugural issue in 2015, SRE has seen year-over-year increases in its number of submissions, size of readership, and frequency of articles cited; all of which we suspect will translate to an equally dynamic trajectory for the journal’s impact factor. *SRE* has also helped grow both theoretical and lay understandings of several areas within the study of race and ethnicity: racial and ethnic identities; the contemporary dynamics of racism, including colorblind racism; and racial attitudes.

Our editorial vision is simple: grow the journal’s growth.

We plan to enact our growth vision on two fronts. The first front involves what *SRE* publishes. Here, we see opportunities for the journal to push the discipline towards a broader, and we think more theoretically sophisticated, understanding of race, place, and process. This will include seeking scholarship that (1) treats place as an active agent in the social world (rather than merely a benign backdrop on which more meaningful social processes play out); (2) engages place-based contexts beyond the U.S.; and (3) recognizes race and racism as dynamic social, political, and historical processes.

The second focus of our editorial vision involves who engages with what *SRE* publishes. Here, we see opportunities to grow the journal’s dedicated readership, to decrease time spent under peer-review so that important scholarship reaches that growing readership more rapidly, and to diversify the avenues by which the journal disseminates key findings and novel ideas. We will accomplish this (1) by making moderate adjustments to the peer-review process and reviewer selection process, (2) by developing a new section within the journal where scholars discuss and debate issues or topics relevant to the sociology of race and ethnicity, and (3) by revamping the journal’s public engagement infrastructure, including its social media footprint.

Building on the Success of SRE

*Sociology of Race and Ethnicity (SRE)* published its first issue in 2015. As the official journal of the American Sociological Association’s Section of Racial and Ethnic Minorities (SREM), *SRE*’s inaugural issue made clear its intent to carry forward the vision of SREM’s founding

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chair, Charles U. Smith: “to maintain and develop the highest levels of interest in, scholarly-concern about, and professional focus upon all aspects of racial and ethnic minorities within the sociological domain.”[1]

Since its inaugural issue, *SRE* has fulfilled and expanded upon Smith’s original vision. Every issue of the journal offers high-quality, cutting-edge research, and welcomes debates and discussions over key theoretical and methodological matters within the study of race and ethnicity. Many issues also include a pedagogical section, where teacher-scholars offer important insights into the teaching of race and ethnicity in the classroom. In just five short years, *SRE* has become a leading academic outlet for the dissemination of social scientific research on race and ethnicity.

We have followed (and anticipated) the journal’s growth since day one: the eloquent introductory essay written by Megan Nanney and the journal’s two current editors David Brunsma and David Embrick, the illuminating “The White Space” by Elijah Anderson, the timely and important “Racializing Crimmigration” by Amada Armenta, just to name a few. Further, one of the authors of this proposal has served on *SRE*’s editorial board since its founding, reviewing many submissions, of which several have been featured within the journal’s pages.

On balance, *SRE* has done what we expect from a leading scholarly outlet: look back while pressing forward, which is to say, reflect the past and prevailing thought paradigms and methodological approaches of a given discipline or subfield while also charting a way toward what’s next. If chosen as the next editors, we will take up that tradition.

As of 2019, SREM is the sixth largest of ASA’s sections. Its membership features some of the disciplines most active and imaginative scholars, sophisticated methodological techniques, and critical points of view. SREM is also home to more than two hundred student members, many of whom rely upon the journal for creative inspiration and professional development. If selected as editors, much of our mission would be to build upon this foundation. That is the looking back part.

As new editors, we also want to press forward, and we see two fronts toward which we might move: a greater and more intentional emphasis on scholarship that brings race, place, and process into focus; and greater attention paid toward expanding the journal’s audience, including its public, non-academic audience.

**Bringing Race, Place, and Process into Focus**

*Place*
In a 2000 review essay [2], Thomas Gieryn commented on sociology’s apparent unwillingness to treat “place” as a theoretically important and materially consequential unit of analysis. “Could it be that place doesn’t matter anymore?” He asked. It was perhaps a rhetorical question—a device—but he answered anyway. “I think it does.” We agree: place matters.

Yet, to our eye, the discipline continues to give short shrift to the social importance of place. As Gieryn and others [3] have noted, the prevailing belief seems to be that place is either a confounding factor that should be controlled away or a benign backdrop on which decidedly more important social processes play out. Each paradigm has translated to an imbalance in the discipline. The first paradigm has meant a dearth of work on “place” as a theoretical construct (for comparison, think about the proliferation of work theorizing race, class, and gender). The second paradigm has meant a glut of work set in urban centers like Chicago and New York (at the expense of non-urban places and locales in the American South) and, more broadly, a bias toward U.S. social problems, movements, and patterns of inequality.

As editors, we will chart a way towards more sophisticated understandings of the social role of place. There are of course instances in which it is useful to “control for” place, and we recognize one of the defining pillars of sociological research is its generalizability, in which we seek patterns and truths that transcend place. Yet, like Gieryn, we believe that place is itself a social force, with unique implications for lived experience and social outcomes. More attention toward the importance of place in sociological analysis is more likely to yield theoretically invigorating research by foregoing the taken-for-grantedness of large, U.S.-based urban centers and their populations as sites which speak for people, everywhere.

Again, place matters; and a part of our editorial vision is to highlight that. We see this manifesting in two ways: (1) emphasizing work that treats place as a socially meaningful unit of analysis; and (2) shifting beyond US-centric approaches to sociological inquiry. To ensure our vision for a greater emphasis on place, we will actively solicit submissions from colleagues whose work shows clear promise in theorizing place's importance to, and imbrication with, the sociology of race and ethnicity. This includes, but is not limited to, reaching out to membership in relevant ASA sections, such as Community and Urban Sociology, and Sociology of Development. We will also recruit colleagues for deputy editorialships and editorial board seats whose work illuminates the intersections of race and place.

**Process**

In preparing our proposal, we reviewed forty-one articles published in Volume 5 (2019) of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. Approximately 25 percent of the research articles we surveyed centered on the dynamics of racial and ethnic identity, and on racial attitudes: how racialized identities interact with other markers of identity, and how racialized persons and groups respond to or consider a variety of social phenomena.
Questions that center racial identity are important, as is research that examines how various racialized persons and groups think about a variety of social phenomena. Yet, we believe the disproportionate attention paid toward these sociological questions has, unintentionally, taken for granted race as a matter of process: that is, how those racial identities manifest, under what kinds of conditions they are made most salient, and how those who understand themselves as members of a particular racial and/or ethnic group come to understand themselves in that way, or how the meanings contained within those identities change over time.

We believe the contexts in which we live merit more attention to processes of racialization. War, disease, and famine disproportionately ravage people of color the world over. Those fleeing from death and destruction encounter shifting sands that recraft religious differences as racial distinctions. Meanwhile, populist movements in Europe and North America use race as a key vehicle through which to channel widespread outrage into political action that threatens the very foundation of liberal democracy. All of these developments and more present an urgent need for sociological analysis that centers how race and racism materialize, and are transmogrified, across these emergent contexts.

To remedy, as editors we will reach out to colleagues presenting papers at national and regional conferences whose research centers race and racism as matters of social, political, and historical processes. We will also appoint deputy editors and editorial board members whose work reflects these similar emphases. In particular, we believe some of the most cutting-edge scholarship is that which considers how race and ethnicity are, to borrow from Stuart Hall, articulated across different periods, and within specific conjunctures: those moments of crisis, political or otherwise, in which the meanings and practices surrounding race, ethnicity, racism, and ethnocentrism shift, and are given new directions, filled with new meanings, and made salient through new practices.

**Principle of Public Sociology as Innovation/Rebuild of the Journal**

We take seriously SREM founding chair Charles Smith’s vision to “to maintain and develop the highest levels of interest in” the sociological study of race and ethnicity. We believe this is accomplished in at least two key ways: (1) by ensuring that our standards for rigorous social scientific research remain high, and (2) by ensuring that our research reaches the widest audience possible of scholars and non-scholars alike.

*Streamlining the Peer-Review Process*

If chosen as the new editors, we will work to ensure that the highest standards for social scientific research on race and ethnicity are maintained. At the same time, we recognize that the very mechanism that ensures those high standards - the peer-review process - often if not always
prohibits our knowledge, understanding, and expertise from getting into the hands of the people who need it the most, when they need it the most.

We have no desire to eliminate peer-review. We do believe, however, that we can improve it. Our plan to improve the peer-review process is two-part. First, we aim to eliminate the common practice of multiple “revise and resubmit” decisions. Under our editorial direction, SRE will provide, when appropriate, only one “revise and resubmit” decision. Reviewers will be instructed upon resubmission to use a simple “publish/do not publish” recommendation, rather than having the option of recommending a second revise and resubmit, as the current review process allows.

Second, we aim to ensure that authors who do receive “revise and resubmit” decisions do not receive new reviewers for their second round of submission. We recognize that in many cases, new reviewers are brought in because original reviewers are no longer available. To remedy, as editors we will ask all reviewers for journal articles to commit to at least, but no more than, two rounds of review for each article. We believe that by addressing this matter more directly at the front-end of peer-review, we will save reviewers and authors more time at the back end.

With just these two improvements, we believe we can decrease the time scholarship spends under review at SRE. By decreasing the time spent under review, we can ensure that the important work of our journal and our journal’s authors gets into the hands of those who need it more quickly.

_Revamping the Public Profile of SRE_

Under our stewardship, we aim to increase our journal’s visibility and viability with a larger, reading public. While improving upon the time scholarship spends under review will certainly help it reach the hands of other scholars more quickly, we believe that sociologists of race and ethnicity have as much, if not more, to say to a wider public than they do one another. Now, more than ever, we need a sociology for the people. To help SRE reach a wider public audience, we propose two ideas: (1) a new Talking Shop, Breaking Bread section within the journal; and (2) a revamped social media infrastructure with a clear commitment to public engagement with the journal’s scholarship and authors.

We recognize that many scholars who seek to be more public with their research and expertise often lack training in how to do this, including a model for what it can look like. Our Talking Shop, Breaking Bread section will provide one such model by way of a conversation between two or more scholars on a contemporary issue or topic relevant to the sociology of race and ethnicity. Our inspiration for this section comes from the sustained dialogue between bell hooks and Cornell West, in their 1991 _Breaking Bread_. As hooks notes, “much of the work we do is published in long manuscript form or in the form of critical essays in academic journals that many people never buy or read,” [7]. A dialogue, however, can more closely resemble a
conversation from everyday life, and invites a wider audience to sit, listen, and learn from those speaking. As editors, we will actively recruit scholars for these conversations. Our recruitment will privilege junior scholars, scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, and scholars from less well-resourced institutions.

Space constraints are real. We recognize that the addition of a new section does not translate into additional pages for publication. To date, the Pedagogy section has received limited submissions, resulting in uneven publications from one issue to the next. Yet we also recognize that the Pedagogy section has provided an outlet for cutting-edge scholarship on how to teach the sociology of race and ethnicity, and that our members greatly benefit from its insights. Therefore, we propose an even split between Pedagogy and the new Taking Shop section for every volume of SRE - two issues for each section, per volume. This will allow for Pedagogy’s continuity, and provide an opportunity to put more of our time and resources into successfully rolling out this new section without the undue pressure of providing this new section for each issue of the journal.

Finally, while we recognize that our editorial responsibilities should privilege what is published in SRE—which has been the focus of our discussion so far—we also see growth potential in what happens after and beyond that. Currently, accessing SRE content requires that a person either have a SAGE account, be affiliated with an institution subscribed to SAGE journals, or secure single-use access to an article. These options are cost-prohibitive, generally difficult to navigate, and make getting the journal’s content into the hands of those who need it most challenging. We have already talked about the necessity of a sociology for the people. In an effort to get there, we want to imagine new ways of getting sociology to the people.

Social media has become an indispensable part of our social worlds—for the powerful, a tool for maintaining the status quo; for marginalized groups, a space to organize and do otherwise; for creatives, a space to build and share original work. Scholars have turned to social media, too: to grow their networks, pitch new ideas, troubleshoot challenges in the classroom, and speak truth to power. As editors, we want to reimagine SRE’s role for these new contexts, and capitalize on the opportunities they present the journal and its authors for impacting public understandings of race, racism, ethnocentrism, and beyond.

SRE has had a twitter account since 2016 and, so far, has attracted a little more than 1,000 followers. Currently, the journal uses the account to tweet short summaries of newly-published articles, with links to the paywall-protected article embedded. While we see utility in this approach—the tweets attract varying levels of engagement—we see room to do more.

As editors, we will work closely with our editorial staff to promote the work of the journal via social media platforms. Here are some of our ideas:
1. We will continue the practice of tweeting short summaries of newly-published articles, appended with a link to the article on SRE’s webpage. However, we would also like to supplement this format by occasionally appending a “screengrab” of article abstracts. Decreasing the amount of “friction” it takes to access article abstracts makes it easier for more people to access new research quickly and will likely attract especially interested individuals to seek out more of the journal’s content.

2. In addition to soliciting the social media handles of all authors whose work is accepted for publication, we will periodically ask authors to draft short profiles that summarize, in common parlance, the key takeaways of their published work. We will then post these profiles using Twitter’s “thread” [8] feature. This approach would allow authors to offer a more detailed overview of their work, add needed context, or even solicit feedback and requests for further information.

3. In addition to tweeting summaries of newly-published articles, we will occasionally tweet summaries or abstracts of past publications. We see a few possibilities for why and when we might make such posts: as a part of the common #ThrowbackThursday hashtag, when there is a notable news story for which an SRE article might offer useful context or insight, or where a newly-published article challenges, extends, or revisits a piece that the journal has published previously. Here is an example of this latter idea: “If you’re interested in our recent article, ‘Where Work Has Been, Where It Is Going’ (by @AdiaHWingfield), you should also check out, ‘They’ll go with the lighter: Tri-racial Aesthetic Labor in Clothing Retail’ (by @Kyla_Walters) from Vol. 4, Issue 1.”

4. Where desired, we will tweet short bios of authors whose work is accepted for publication. For instance, “Our most recent issue features 16 scholars! First up, is @BBrianFoster, who writes about race and regional development in the rural South. His article “Name of article,” explores x, y, and z. Dr. Foster is currently an assistant professor of sociology and southern studies at @OleMissRebels.” Again, where our desired text exceeds the character limit of a single tweet, we would use Twitter’s “thread” feature.

5. In an effort to grow SRE’s audience—and the profiles of the scholars whose work we feature—we will be intentional about tagging news and press outlets when new research is published.

The above represents just a sample of our ideas for growing the SRE’s social media imprint. As active users of social media, we recognize that some approaches that seem good in theory don’t always work well in practice. As we implement our plan, we will take note of what generates engagement and what doesn’t, and adjust our method of engagement appropriately. We will also rely upon our authors and editorial board members to provide us with ongoing feedback. By actively soliciting our authors’ and editorial board members’ feedback and ideas, we hope to make the journal’s commitment to public engagement a collective enterprise.
Background and Qualifications (1 paragraph for each of us)

B. Brian Foster is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. His research and public writing focus on black community life in the post-Soul (i.e., post-1960’s) rural American South. His book, *I Don’t Like the Blues: Race, Place, and the Backbeat of Black Life* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020) chronicles more than five years of ethnographic work in the Mississippi Delta. He has also written for several regional and national outlets, including *Bitter Southerner, CNN, Oxford Magazine*, and *Washington Post*. Foster’s work has garnered support and recognition from the American Sociological Association, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Science Foundation. Foster also works closely with several non-profit organizations based in the Mississippi Delta.

James M. Thomas (JT) is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Mississippi. His research centers the causes and consequences of race and racism, in both historical and contemporary contexts. He is the author of four books, including *Diversity Regimes: Why Talk is Not Enough to Fix Racial Inequality at Universities* (Rutgers University Press, 2020) and *Are Racists Crazy? How Prejudice, Racism, and Antisemitism Became Markers of Insanity* (New York University Press, 2016 with Sander L. Gilman). He is also author of more than twenty peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and invited essays. His research has been featured in *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, Ethnic and Racial Studies, The Du Bois Review, Ethnicities*, and *Social Problems*. Thomas has been awarded funding for his research through the American Sociological Association and National Science Foundation’s joint Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline. Thomas is deeply dedicated to public scholarship, regularly writing for popular outlets, serving on the boards of non-profit organizations, and giving public lectures on race, racism, and inequality to academic and lay audiences alike.

Collectively, we bring strong editorial and administrative experience. Professor Thomas is co-editor of the “Theories and Theorists” section for the Routledge Encyclopedia of Race and Racism (with Professor W. Carson Byrd). He served on the editorial board for *Contexts* from 2014-2017. He is a founding editorial board member for *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, having served since 2015. Since 2018, he has served as an editorial board member for *Social Problems*. Professor Thomas has also served as a committee member for the Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities’ Oliver Cromwell Cox Article Award, given annually by the section to the best research article in the sociological study of race and ethnicity. Professor Foster has also served on the editorial board of *Social Problems* since 2018. While in graduate school at the University of North Carolina, Professor Foster provided support for the journal, *Social Forces*. In addition, Professor Foster has been an active member of the Southern Sociological Society, for several years, and currently serves on the organization’s Publications Committee. Both Thomas and Foster have served as reviewers for a number of journals and book publishers in the field,

**Institutional Support**

The University of Mississippi, and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, has a strong history of successfully hosting academic journals including *Community Development* and *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*. The University of Mississippi is committed to supporting *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* should we be selected as its next editors. The University of Mississippi has promised to provide office and computer support, and dedicated graduate assistantships. As editors, we aim to keep the journal’s existing practice of using graduate assistantships to support both a managing editor and assistant managing editor. The chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the director for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts have promised to manage our teaching commitments so that we can dedicate the necessary time to the journal’s activities.

[3] See Larry Griffin’s “The Promise of a Sociology of the South” in *Southern Cultures* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2001); and Zandria Robinson’s *This Ain’t Chicago: Race, Class, and Regional Identity in the Post-Soul South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).