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Dear members of the Committee on Publications:

We are excited to present our proposal to be the next Co-Editors of *Sociology of Education (SOE)*. In this proposal, we describe our shared vision for the journal, our assessment of *SOE*’s strengths and where new attention should be focused, our qualifications for the position, our vision for diversity, equity and inclusion for *SOE*, and the university support we would receive, should we be selected. We are eager to undertake the opportunity to co-edit *SOE* and are committed to the continued growth and success of this impactful journal.

**Vision Statement**

The State of the Sociology of Education: Research on education has grown tremendously in the last 20+ years. A review of publications in the top sociology and education journals reveals growing diversity in the breadth of topics studied, the methodological approaches employed, the data sources analyzed, and the disciplinary and theoretical perspectives utilized by researchers. While the field of education has proliferated, so have societal forces that have impacted global education systems. Examples include: the COVID-19 pandemic, which dramatically changed many aspects of schooling and achievement trajectories; an increase in diversity in school-going populations; technological advancements that complicate and innovate teaching and learning; and political culture wars that question what can be taught and learned. These developments, among others, pose both a challenge and an opportunity for sociologists of education. The challenge for our subfield is to demonstrate that sociologists have a distinctive and valuable perspective to offer in studying education. The opportunity is to draw upon the long tradition of vibrant theorizing and rigorous research in our subfield to bring attention to and find ways to address the many pressing social issues – of health, mobility, diversity, technology and politics – that intersect with education to impact people’s lives, opportunities, outcomes, and longevity.

More now than ever, a sociological perspective on education is needed. This perspective places learning, education and schooling in conversation with broader social contexts and concerns, provides theories and concepts that identify specific features of the status attainment process and schooling system that shape students’ access to human, material, and other resources that affect their learning and educational attainment. Sociologists examine how families, peers, school personnel, organizations, institutions, and policy-makers shape the allocation of educational resources and opportunities, as well as how resources and opportunities shape outcomes. Social reproduction and mobility are strong themes that inform work in our field. Overall, scholars have built a robust body of empirical work that describes and explains how educational systems work, how inequality is generated and perpetuated, the ways schooling intersects with other social institutions, and the ever-evolving nature of learning. While theory strongly informs and motivates our work, sociologists of education utilize a diverse array of methodological approaches to studying these questions. Thus, our vision is to draw on the vibrant and diverse methodological and empirical nature of our subfield to bring renewed attention to the varied ways education and learning occur within and outside of schools.
The State of the Journal (SOE): In our review of manuscripts published in issues from 2016 through 2023, it is clear that the SOE is in good shape on numerous dimensions. SOE authors typically exhibit a strong theoretical framework to motivate their research questions, unlike much recent scholarship in top educational journals, which can fairly be critiqued as a-theoretical. Moreover, the diversity of topics, questions, and data sources that have appeared in published articles during the last seven years is quite striking. Numerous authors analyzed state administrative data sets, while others analyzed data they themselves had collected or compiled. This is an important shift because it broadens the scope of the contributions that SOE authors can make with their research because authors can better match their questions with the strengths of their data. From 2016-23, articles published in SOE were nicely balanced across K-8, secondary, and post-secondary school settings. Methodological diversity is also apparent in the journal, with a reasonable balance between papers using qualitative and quantitative methodologies (given the subfield). The rigor of quantitative research published in the journal has improved markedly in the past several years and much of the qualitative research recently published in SOE raises questions, and presents theories and data that is not found in other education journals (such as EEPA, or AERJ).

The journal is also succeeding based on other important metrics. SOE is fortunate to have a large pool of submitted manuscripts – 274 new submissions in 2022. This large pool means that we can maintain high standards, which are reflected in an acceptance rate of about 6.6% in 2022. However, the time from submission to decision has crept up, from a low of 5 weeks in 2014, to a high of 11.6 weeks in 2022. Reducing the turnaround time for manuscripts is an important goal that we will pursue, given that lengthy delays have implications for both career prospects as well as the timely dissemination of research findings. We believe that seven weeks is both a reasonable and achievable goal, and we will describe our plan for accomplishing it below.

Guiding Principles: Our foremost responsibility as Co-Editors of SOE would be to ensure that the journal publishes the highest quality manuscripts in the field. What do we mean by “high quality?” First, a SOE paper should be well-grounded in a sociological framework, where authors conceptualize and frame their research questions using sociological theories and concepts. Sociological theories highlight key attributes of social systems that are overlooked or de-emphasized in other fields and disciplines. A successful SOE paper must demonstrate how sociological theories and concepts are crucial tools for understanding topics and questions regarding education. Second, SOE papers must also be methodologically rigorous. Findings must be credible and convincing to other experts on a given topic, and alternative explanations for patterns in the data must be sufficiently accounted for in the analysis. Finally, research findings don’t speak for themselves. SOE authors must communicate the substantive significance and importance of their findings effectively to other scholars and the public, which will enhance their contributions to the field and make work found in SOE increasingly useful for informing policy and practice.

As Co-Editors, we will ensure that the peer review process serves not only as a filter for quality, but also as a mechanism for improving scholars’ work. Every submitting author, regardless of the decision on the manuscript, deserves feedback from the Editor and reviewers that will help him/her/them improve the quality of the work. As Co-Editors, we will stress to reviewers that constructive critique is a central component of the review process. We will also provide our own feedback on manuscripts (where needed), and help the author(s) navigate the sometimes conflicting or divergent recommendations offered by reviewers. As Co-Editors, our role is to ensure that each submitting author receives a “road map” to improve their paper the next time it is sent out for review (at SOE or elsewhere).

Every reviewer’s time is precious, and we will desk-reject manuscripts that clearly do not meet the journal’s standards of quality. Weak papers, and those that are a poor fit for the journal, will not be sent out for review. By exercising the prerogative to “desk reject” a minority of papers with little to no chance of being published, we will avoid an overburdening of the pool of potential reviewers (an
increasing problem in the peer review process). Finally, we will always provide desk-rejected authors a letter with specific reasons for the decision along with some suggestions for improvement.

To reduce the time-to-decision for manuscripts, we have several strategies that we will pursue. In terms of intake, we will determine whether each paper will be sent out for review within 72 hours of receipt. Next, we will send invitations to reviewers within seven days from submission. Securing commitments from invited reviewers has become a major challenge in academic publishing. It is surely one reason why the time-to-decision at SOE has risen in the past several years. We have several strategies to address this issue. First, we will ask our editorial board members to review 6-8 papers per year, and we will replace members who do not meet these expectations. Second, we plan to do some personal outreach when inviting reviewers for papers. As Deputy Editor for SOE in 2023, Carbonaro sent email invitations to reviewers that included short, personalized notes. This approach was very effective, since he never had to invite more than four reviewers to secure three affirmative responses per manuscript. Likewise, when reviewers were late with their reviews, personal outreach was also effective in getting reviews submitted in a timely manner. Finally, we will make decisions and send letters to authors no more than a week after the reviews have been received. Based on these strategies, we believe that we can reduce turnaround times for submissions and achieve our goal of seven weeks (or less) to a decision.

For manuscripts that receive a “revise and resubmit,” we will provide the author(s) with one major opportunity to make the manuscript suitable for publication. It is unfair to subject authors to multiple waves of R&Rs, often with new reviewers in each round. In our experience, multiple rounds of R&Rs all diminish the quality and coherence of papers that are ultimately published. By minimizing the number of R&Rs, we will also minimize the burden on reviewers.

Transparency in Research: Authors must be transparent regarding how their research was conducted, so that other scholars have the necessary information to judge the quality of their work. Recent scandals in academic publishing have created a heightened urgency regarding the issues of transparency and the replicability of published research for journal editors. Unfortunately, sociology has been slower than other disciplines to establish guidelines that create both transparency and accountability in peer reviewed publications. Editors have an opportunity to establish new norms and foster a culture that encourages transparency in scholarship, and enables the replication of published research. Numerous models to promote “transparent and replicable research” have already been developed (e.g., Elman, Kapiszewski, and Lupia 2018). And “positionality statements” offer additional avenues to promote transparency in research. These statements would be optional, but they would allow authors the opportunity to explain how their own biography and experience have shaped important features of their published work. Thus, as Co-Editors of SOE, we would develop a voluntary set of guidelines for SOE authors that will make published research transparent and replicable. Through outreach and training via virtual workshops and conference info-sessions, we hope to encourage a critical mass of SOE authors to follow these “best practices” as a way to increase confidence in the validity of their findings.

Dissemination and promotion: Publishing outstanding papers is only one of SOE’s main objectives as a journal. Arguably, SOE’s most important goal is to shape the future research agendas of scholars and to elevate and inform public discourse and debate in the area of education. SOE papers should also serve as resources that help the general public better understand and debate important educational issues. Given these various journal objectives, and acknowledging that authors have different goals and audiences that they hope to reach with their work, our approach to dissemination and promotion will be multi-faceted. Upon article acceptance, we will contact each SOE author and encourage him/her/them to contemplate strategies for promoting their work to different audiences, suggesting contacts and offering resources and strategies for maximizing the reach and impact of their scholarly work. This may entail sharing news of their forthcoming publication with their department chair, helping them get in contact with public
affairs staff at their institution to promote the scholarship and encourage issue of a press release, or suggest they highlight their published work in an opinion article in a news outlet or on social media.

**Qualifications to be Editor**

We each bring our own strengths to serve as Co-Editors of SOE. Carbonaro has published in sociology and education journals for 25 years. He has a broad research agenda that focuses on educational inequality, with published work in the areas of school effects, peer effects, curricular differentiation (“tracking”), and labor market inequality with a focus on education and cognitive skills. Carbonaro has published in SOE six times during his career, so he understands how to frame a paper and conduct an analysis that meets the demanding standards of SOE.

Carbonaro has served on the editorial board of SOE, and is currently a deputy editor for the journal (starting 2023). He served on the editorial boards of the American Sociological Review, the American Education Research Journal, and Social Forces. He has received five awards for his outstanding work as a reviewer (from EEPA, AERJ [twice], and SOE [twice]). His skills as a reviewer will translate well in making decisions about manuscripts when serving as an Editor of SOE. As a quantitative researcher, who teaches graduate-level statistics courses (Linear Regression, Categorical Data Analysis, and Causal Inference), Carbonaro possesses the requisite technical skills to evaluate manuscripts that address complicated methodological questions and topics.

Haskins is a former elementary school teacher with research interests that focus on ways the education system, the family, and the criminal legal system connect and interact in ways that both exacerbate and mitigate social inequality, with emphasis on early educational outcomes, intergenerational impacts, and disparities by race/ethnicity. Her work has been published in various education and sociology journals for over a decade, including in SOE twice. While squarely trained as a quantitative sociologist of education, Haskins has experience in interdisciplinary and policy arenas, engages in quasi-experimental, mixed-methods, and qualitative research, teaches on topics of race, social inequality, and schooling, and works to bring education into conversation with other central social institutions, drawing attention to the educational implications of family disruption, carceral logics, race and racism, and social inequality among others.

Haskins has served on the editorial boards of the American Sociological Review (2017-2020) and the Journal of Health and Social Behavior (2023-present), and has reviewed for countless education, criminology, demography, and sociology journals and presses. She has held leadership roles in two large ASA sections (Sociology of Education; Inequality, Poverty and Mobility), and has engaged deeply in mentorship in the discipline, mentoring graduate students and junior faculty, many of whom are women and/or scholars of color, within her home department, ASA, the Association of Black Sociologists, the Institute for Research on Poverty, and the Sociology of Education Association.

**Editorial Board and Deputy Editors**

Our plan is to select deputy editors and editorial board members who possess both substantive expertise and methodological skills that complement our own strengths. We see the deputy editor role as a great opportunity to develop and mentor future leaders in our subfield. Thus, we will invite a team of three to four up-and-coming scholars who have recently been tenured. This group will include scholars who have cutting-edge training in methods, and who are publishing groundbreaking work. We would leave one deputy editor spot for a senior scholar who would complement this group.

In assembling the editorial board, our goal is to maximize diversity across substantive areas within our subfield, methodological expertise, and overall demographic composition. The editorial board will serve three main roles. First, as mentioned above, these board members will be expected to be outstanding reviewers who will review 6-8 reviews per year. Second, we expect the editorial board to actively
promote the journal by soliciting strong manuscripts for the journal, particularly in the substantive areas where we struggle to get strong manuscripts (e.g., international work, comparative historical analyses, research practice partnerships, etc.). Finally, we will rely on the editorial board to help develop new initiatives and guidelines for the journal, such as the new guidelines for “transparent and replicable” research described above.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

As a journal, *SOE* must support and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in its leadership, review process, and its published work. As noted above, we will select deputy editors and editorial board members who will bring demographic diversity to the leadership of *SOE*. Our goal is to ensure that *SOE*’s leadership mirrors the composition our subfield/section. However, diverse representation alone is insufficient to maximize DEI at *SOE*. We also want to ensure that the authorship, methodological representation, and substantive topics covered within the journal are diverse. For starters, we will continue to signal a receptiveness to both quantitative and qualitative work to attract the broadest and most diverse submissions. We will also work to address the issue of under-representation of authors of color through strategic outreach and high-quality peer review. Our editorial board will be proactive in soliciting manuscripts to *SOE*, being very attentive to inviting strong contributions by scholars of color that are presented at a range of conferences and encouraging editorial board members and other senior scholars to mentor junior scholars from underrepresented groups, and make them feel welcomed, supported, and included by the journal. Finally, to promote substantive topic-level diversity, we will continue to engage in efforts of cross-fertilization, inequality-innovation, and expansion beyond the K-16 sphere initiated by the editorship of Diamond and Johnson.

**Institutional Support**

Notre Dame has committed to supporting our proposal to serve as Co-Editors of *SOE*. We have included our letter of support from the office of our Dean.

In closing, we are very excited about the opportunity to lead *SOE* as Co-Editors at a time when our subfield is thriving. Our goal is for *SOE* to continue pushing the sociology of education to innovate (theoretically and methodologically) and make important empirical contributions. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

William Carbonaro

Anna Haskins