PROPOSAL FOR CO-EDITORSHIP OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW  
Submitted to the ASA Committee on Publications

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VISION STATEMENT

As the flagship journal of the American Sociological Association, *American Sociological Review* is the discipline’s indispensable journal. While the landscape of scholarly publishing is rapidly changing, ASR remains the “must-read” journal for sociologists and other social scientists, one with an outsized influence on scholarship. For example, ASR’s 2018 Web of Science impact factor of 5.4 was considerably higher than the impact factors of flagship journals of other social science associations, such as the *American Political Science Review* (3.9), *American Economic Review* (4.1), and *American Anthropologist* (2.7). ASR’s mission, as presented on the journal’s website, is “to publish original works of interest to the discipline of sociology in general, new theoretical developments, results of research that advance understanding of fundamental social processes, and important methodological innovations.” The ASR editors play a role in shaping the journal’s content and practices, but the journal belongs to the discipline and its members. If selected as editors, we will work in the interests of our professional colleagues, advancing the mission of the journal and maintaining its impact, visibility, and centrality to the life of the discipline.

Advancing the journal’s mission

Advancing ASR’s mission requires that published work meet the highest standards of scholarship in our field, regardless of theoretical or methodological orientation. Work in central subfields will no doubt be well-represented in ASR regardless of the editorial team. However, we believe ASR should also be the outlet for the most creative and innovative research in all areas of the field, including new and emerging subfields that will drive the disciplinary conversation in the years to come. Recent editors have emphasized diversity in subfield, theory, and methodology. We will build on the success of past editors by following practices that encourage diverse submissions and impartial evaluations. To this end, we will pursue three strategies. First, we will work to maintain an editorial board that represents the full range of sociological perspectives. Second, we will emphasize transparent standards of evaluation. While the precise manifestation of such standards may vary across subfields, all prioritize (1) clarity in writing, organization, and interpretation, (2) theoretical development and insight, (3) empirical rigor, and (4) innovation and creativity in evaluating the quality of research. Third, we propose to expand the number of deputy editors beyond the current seven. The primary role of the expanded set of deputy editors would be to offer advice and judgment on promising papers outside our substantive or methodological areas of expertise that are given strongly contrasting assessments by reviewers. Our aim is to have such “near the bar” papers given a close reading by deputy editors who are fully conversant with the modes of research and the manifestation of our standards of evaluation in that area. To that end, we have made preliminary contact with a number of scholars around the country to gauge interest and, thus, the likely success of this initiative were we to be selected as editors. The response has been positive and we are confident that, along with an editorial board that reflects the range of sociological perspectives and transparent standards of
evaluation, we can achieve further progress in making ASR home to important research being done in all areas of our discipline.

Advancing ASR's mission requires more than this. As the premier generalist journal in the field, ASR plays a critical integrative role. It informs readers of developments in subfields that may be quite distant from their own and creates a space in which readers are regularly led to reflect on the links between their own work and work in distant subfields. In this integrative vein, we also believe ASR should strive (as stated in its mission statement) to publish work that is of general interest, rather than of specific interest to narrow subfields. As editors, we would therefore give priority to articles that, ceteris paribus, speak to the broadest audience. Some manuscripts may arrive that already bridge subfields, speak to issues of great general interest or importance, or are written in a style that is clear and accessible to those outside of the specialist audience. Others may have such potential but require that we solicit specific suggestions from reviewers about how the manuscript’s impact could be broadened and communicate with authors about to extend the reach of their work. To be sure, specialization is expected in any growing field of scholarly endeavor and ASR should be home to exciting, cutting-edge research in all subfields. As the discipline’s flagship journal, however, we believe it should also encourage intellectual cross-fertilization, leave highly specialized research to specialty journals, and advance and invite all sociologists into a common scholarly discussion.

**Maintaining impact, visibility, and centrality to the life of the discipline**

ASR is important to sociologists because it presents the very best sociological research to internal and external audiences. We will develop all of our editorial practices with that central mission in mind. We are also quite conscious of the fact that ASR is important for sociological careers as well. In some departments, junior faculty members are expected to publish at least one article in ASR before being considered for tenure and promotion. Because of ASR’s legitimating role, the editors have a special responsibility to ensure that authors receive timely and constructive feedback. We intend to follow previous editors in working to maintain reasonable review periods and to provide authors with constructive feedback.

In this regard, we take not only recent ASR editorial practices as guide but also look to practices followed when Gary Fine served as editor of Social Psychology Quarterly. He asked reviewers to prepare “2-2 reviews:” 2-page reviews returned in 2-weeks’ time. While this specific schedule is likely unrealistic for ASR – average turn-around time under the current editors has been around 7.4 weeks for papers that went through peer review – we will continue to prioritize and encourage prompt return of reviews.

We will continue the current editors’ practice of providing informative and helpful summaries of reviews, especially to those whose manuscripts are rejected from further consideration. Our summaries will identify key areas of concern and provide clear guidance on productive directions for revision, whether for ASR for other outlets. When manuscripts fall far outside of our areas of expertise, we will ask deputy editors to prepare these summaries, which will then inform our editorial decisions. While the proposal guidelines state that we should not name prospective deputy editors in this document, we intend, as discussed above, to appoint deputies whose strengths complement our own.
Some proportion of the submissions to *ASR* are inappropriate for the journal, either because they have a non-sociological focus, do not involve original research, or unambiguously fail to meet basic standards of evaluation. To facilitate prompt review, it is important for editors to responsibly exercise the discretion they have been entrusted with to “desk reject” such manuscripts. The last two editorial teams have rejected, respectively, between 10-15% and 14-29% of new submissions each year without review. While it is unclear to what extent the higher rate of rejection without review by the current editors reflects change over time in the sorts of paper submitted to *ASR* versus greater exercise of editorial discretion, we envision “desk rejecting” somewhere around the average 23% of new submissions rejected by the current editors. It is simply not in the best interests of the author, the scholarly community, or the journal to send manuscripts out for review when they are clearly inappropriate for the journal. It is never pleasant to be informed that your submission is not appropriate. As such, it is important to provide the same clear, sober summary of our assessment, with direction, as appropriate, on alternative outlets, that we intend to provide to submissions that are sent out for review.

Other than concerns about long turn-around times, few issues dominate discussion of the publication process in sociology more than the related issue of different journals’ practices regarding “revise and resubmit” decisions. Our approach will be to invite revision after initial review only when reviewers (or editors) are able to identify a clear path to publication for the manuscript. If such a path can be identified and the odds of publication appear reasonable, authors will be invited to resubmit. If such a path cannot be identified, we will not offer authors the opportunity to resubmit. When acceptance is very unlikely, offering the opportunity for revision prolongs the review process and deprives the authors of the opportunity to submit their manuscripts to more suitable journals. These delays are especially consequential for junior faculty. In applying this criterion, we are following the current policy at *Social Problems* and the practice the current editorial team at *ASR*, both of which strive to make final decisions after one round of revision. Doing so, second rounds of “revise and resubmit” will be rare. They will be requested only when the odds of publication are very high. If at all possible, such second-round revisions will be evaluated exclusively by the original reviewers and, as appropriate, a deputy editor or member of the editorial board.

As important as *ASR* is to professional conversations among sociologists, it has an equally important role to play in advocating for sociology with external audiences, including sociologists outside of the United States, scholars in allied disciplines, and policy makers. We know that recent editorial teams and ASA have worked to increase *ASR*’s visibility and, while difficult to precisely gauge their success, these efforts appear to have yielded results. Purely anecdotally, for instance, we have in recent years been pleasantly surprised to see articles in *ASR* referenced in a variety of media at a rate that is notably higher than a decade ago. We are excited by the opportunity of building on this success by working with the ASA Media Office to encourage media exposure across a variety of platforms, with Sage and ASA to continue the podcast series, and maintaining the @asr_journal Twitter account. While English is the language of international sociology, we believe more can be done to make American sociological research accessible worldwide and to signal a welcome to the international community. We would revive the prior editorial team’s practice of preparing Spanish-
language translations of ASR abstracts on the ASR website and expand the translations to other languages. Indiana University offers courses in more languages than any other university in the United States (i.e., more than 70). Graduate students associated with those programs would be a ready and willing labor market for hourly work in translation. Languages we would consider for expanded translation include Chinese, Russian, and French (Francophone Africa). Finally, we are interested in exploring ways of disseminating content to scholars in allied disciplines. One way of accomplishing this objective would be to arrange exchanges of new table of contents announcements with journals in those disciplines via Twitter (e.g., the American Journal of Political Science, the journal of the Midwest Political Science Association, has over 11,000 followers at @AJPS_Editor).

**Editorial coordination**

If selected, we would use the established and effective practice of dividing up manuscripts evenly and randomly between the two co-editors. The co-editors will be responsible for: (1) the labor of determining and issuing desk rejections for remit; (2) the distribution of manuscripts to reviewers and other members of the editorial team for subject matter expertise; (3) coordinating the drafting responses to reviews and appeals; and (4) the public representation of the journal at panels and other functions. The lead editor of each paper will shepherd the manuscript through the review process and make a recommendation to the other editor, thus before any final decision is made on a manuscript, both editors will be informed of the rationale informing it.

We will select a methodologically and substantively diverse pool of deputy editors, who will also reflect the demographics of our discipline. Following traditional practice, we will assign manuscripts to deputy editors whenever the editors have a conflict of interest. In the case in which one of the two co-editors has a conflict, that co-editor will recuse him/herself from the final decision-making process and one of the deputy editors will take her or his place. In the case of submissions from our institution, both editors will recuse themselves and a second deputy editor will be assigned to confer on the final disposition of the manuscript with the lead deputy. As touched on above, the deputy editors’ primary responsibility will be to offer advice on promising papers that are “near the bar,” but are in areas orthogonal enough to those of the editors that the expertise of the deputy is necessary to make a sound judgment on the disposition of the paper. Accordingly, we will appoint an expanded group of deputy editors who complement our areas of expertise. Given that many editorial decisions hinge on specialized methodological evaluations, we intend to appoint deputy editors who, in addition to their substantive expertise, also bring expertise in advanced methods: ethnographic and other qualitative methods, quantitative methods (including methods for “big data”), and historical and comparative (case-based) methods. We anticipate inviting deputy editors whose substantive expertise complements our own in areas such as social movements, urban sociology, religion, gender/sexuality, education, organizations/institutions, culture, and law and criminology.

We will also maintain an editorial board comprised of scholars with different theoretical and methodological expertise, as well as subfield expertise, who again reflect the demographics of the discipline. Our aim is to assign an editorial board member to review the vast majority of the papers sent out for review. We will also rely on board members to review revised and resubmitted when the original reviewers are
unavailable to serve as reviewers in the second round. We expect that editorial board members will review one manuscript per month.

EDITORS’ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Art Alderson’s interests lie in the areas of social stratification, economic and political sociology, comparative and historical sociology, and international development. He is currently doing quantitative research on income inequality; inter-city relations and the global urban hierarchy; status, subjective well-being, and consumption; and the causes and social consequences of globalization. His work has appeared in the American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces and specialty journals in his area (e.g., Urban Studies, Poetics, International Journal of Comparative Sociology). He has previously served on the editorial boards of the American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, and Socius. He is currently serving another term on the editorial board of Social Forces and is member of the board of Sociology of Development. He has served on the Advisory Panel for the National Science Foundation’s Sociology program, reviewed manuscripts for thirty-two scholarly journals, and regularly reviewed proposals for the National Science Foundation.

Dina Okamoto works in the areas of race and ethnicity, immigration, social movements, and social psychology. Her research has addressed intergroup conflict, cooperation, and collective action, within the context of immigrant civic and political incorporation, and panethnic group formation and change. Her current projects draw upon interview, archival, observational, survey, event, and text data, and she uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. Her work has appeared in a range of journals including American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Social Problems, Socius, and Social Psychology Quarterly. Okamoto has extensive editorial experience, having served on the editorial boards for ASR, Social Forces, SPQ, and Social Problems. She has served on the Advisory Panel for the National Science Foundation’s Sociology program; regularly reviewed research proposals for the Russell Sage Foundation and William T. Grant Foundation; and reviewed manuscripts for several academic journals.