Proposal for Co-Editorship of Sociology of Education
Submitted to the ASA Committee on Publications

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We are excited to submit our application to be the Co-Editors of Sociology of Education (SOE). In this document, we describe our vision for the journal, how we would carry out its editorial operations, our qualifications for this role, and the departmental and university support we would receive from the University of Wisconsin - Madison and Johns Hopkins University. If selected as the new SOE editors, we would build on the journal's strengths by encouraging submissions that enhance its theoretical and methodological breadth and treat educational institutions and processes as spaces for examining critical sociological issues.

Vision Statement

As readers, contributors, and editorial board members, we have learned a great deal from work published in the journal. SOE is among the most highly respected journals in the discipline. According to Journal Citation Reports, SOE's two-year impact factor of 3.647, ranking it 7th out of 150 sociology journals, and its 5-year impact factor of 4.256, ranking 9th. The journal's ranking and reputation are well-deserved. SOE publishes methodologically sophisticated work that speaks to core substantive issues relevant to the sociology of education. As stewards of the journal, we would build on this strong foundation by publishing rigorous, timely, and vital scholarship that highlights educational institutions and processes as generative spaces for interrogating important sociological questions. To do this, we would encourage cross-fertilization among the various sociological subfields that inform the sociology of education, seek to publish innovative scholarship on inequality, and encourage more studies that examine education beyond K-16 educational institutions.

Cross-Fertilization

The sociology of education is a vibrant and eclectic subfield. However, scholars in the various research traditions that inform the sociology of education have often not conversed. We believe that this balkanization limits the potential of the sociology of education as a subfield and that bridging some of these gaps would help move the sociology of education forward most productively.

In other words, we believe that SOE can and should be a context that builds upon sociological work on culture, the family, social movement, gender, sexuality, organizations, race/ethnicity, political sociology, and comparative international scholarship but also places work in these areas into conversation where appropriate. Schools are core institutions through which these subdomains relate and impact student outcomes in powerful yet unrealized ways. For example, we have yet to understand how social media has formed alternative educational spaces in which school peers have organized protests and given voice to their civic concerns in recent years and how those actions were inspired and engaged by schools and law enforcement. Timely work such as this might enlist and inform social movements research, big data/computational methods, and political sociology to understand how a school's social organization and peer networks shape student activism outside of schools.
Likewise, while similar forces shape K-12 schools and higher education institutions, scholars who study these contexts don't often reference each other's work. In addition, these levels of education interpenetrate in ways that we sometimes overlook. Bridging these seemingly disparate domains is necessary to understand learning across the life course, key factors within students' educational transitions, and the potential alignment and discontinuities of institutional policies and practices that form the P-16+ continuum.

Similarly, scholars who study school organization and organizational improvement often don't engage with more critical scholarship that approaches research questions with a different set of assumptions about the nature and purpose of education and schools' organization. For instance, work that explicitly connects organizational sociology and the sociology of race has helped advance how we understand racialized organizations. Such synthetic approaches could help inform how we examine the organization of schools and students' experiences within them. Likewise, while work on racial disparities in education is very common in the journal's pages, such work does not always capitalize fully on the rich theoretical tools emerging from the sociology of race. New insights on race have appeared across several ASA publications in recent years but particularly in the Sociology of Race and Ethnicity. Work in SOE could benefit from a deeper engagement with race scholarship to expand the theoretical and methodological tools that inform our understanding of race, ethnicity, immigration, and education.

Innovation in the Study of Educational Inequality

There is no doubt that inequality has been among the most central topics in the sociology of education and SOE's pages (as scholars like Brint, 2003; Mehta and Davies, 2018 have demonstrated). This has led some to suggest that inequality has received too much attention and that other issues should receive more. We recognize the importance of this conversation but also believe that inequality will remain one key focus of SOE based on its continued emphasis among scholars in the field. In moving the journal forward, we would encourage innovation in how inequality is studied by drawing on emergent, theoretically and methodologically rigorous approaches that enhance the precision of the new knowledge generated. As one would expect any editorial team to leverage its research communities and interests to augment a journal's capacity, our research backgrounds and scholarly networks are uniquely ideal for identifying emergent and innovative studies of inequality and moving them forward.

For instance, we will seek scholarship that extends the theoretical tools that guide the work and seek methodological approaches that build on these theoretical advancements. Some innovative and vital work that has moved sociology forward in recent decades has emerged from outside traditional sociology departments but recently come to play an influential role in the field. For example, work on intersectionality borrowed from Black feminist scholarship, critical legal studies, and work in education schools has become vital to understanding educational inequality and led to methodological innovations. Likewise, some sociologists are usefully drawing on and critiquing work on critical race theory (CRT) and anti-Black racism, which also began outside sociology. While we are committed to advancing core sociological insights and perspectives related to inequality, we believe that what is essential to sociology can be maintained while engaging insights from other, complementary intellectual spaces in the academy. That being said, as editors we would always publish the most rigorous scholarship we receive with the advice of our deputy editors, editorial
board, and external reviewers and will not privilege work in any one area of scholarship or from any specific methodological tradition.

Expanding Beyond the Sociology of K-16 Educational Institutions

As SOE editor, Linda Renzulli sought to expand the journal's scope beyond the organization of schooling. We would continue this effort. While the journal's substantive scope has been impressive, educational contexts outside have not received much attention. We believe that there are opportunities to publish more work on community-based education spaces, social movements, and work on the relationship between neighborhood and community contexts in which schools are embedded (e.g., the role of gentrification, migration, and displacement in metropolitan regions). In fact, COVID-19 has forced us all to imagine schooling and learning when school buildings are closed and how families, neighborhoods, and virtual spaces are challenged by the demands and pursuit of a displaced formal education. Rather than being numb to recent events, the sociology of education should be a scientific venue for the examination of educational displacement, school closures, the relegation of formal education to non-formal and informal contexts, and the social processes, resilience, inequities and inequalities that arose in response and will continue to be important.

Journal Operations

An efficient, rigorous, and transparent editorial process is central to the journal’s reputation, quality, and success and would be the hallmark of our editorship. Having collectively served on SOE’s editorial board under multiple editors (including Linda Renzulli), we believe that the journal’s current processes and procedures provide an excellent road map to follow and build upon. We have also learned a great deal in our discussions about the SOE editorship with Linda Renzulli and would continue this dialogue to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

Editorial Team and Editing Operations

We are submitting this application as a co-editing team because we believe that our combined experience and expertise would serve SOE well. As a team, we bring substantive depth in sociology and education, broad methodological knowledge, and openness to various theoretical and methodological perspectives. Together, our methodological tool kits include qualitative approaches (qualitative case studies, interview studies, ethnographies, and qualitative social network analysis) and quantitative/computational approaches (counterfactual modeling, machine learning/matching algorithms, data harmonization, multilevel statistical modeling/HLM, statistical research synthesis/meta-analysis, geospatial modeling). We also view our leadership in sociology, our role as mentors to emerging scholars, and our ability to bridge the discipline of sociology and the fields of education and public policy as beneficial to SOE. We say a bit more about ourselves as co-editors in the section on editors’ backgrounds below.

As a team, we would use a systematic process for carrying out our key roles. Our primary work as editors would be to (1) divide manuscripts to shepherd through the process based on our expertise, (2) determine which manuscripts should be desk rejected and which should continue through the external review process, (3) identify reviewers and facilitate the distribution of manuscripts to them, (4) draft responses and communicate with authors, and (5) publicly represent the journal in various
venues. Before final editorial decisions on manuscripts, we plan to consult with our co-editor to clarify and coordinate in the publication process.

Deputy Editors

We view our theoretical, substantive, and methodological breadth and depth as clear assets to the journal. However, we would continue the practice of using multiple deputy editors to supplement our knowledge. We would likely increase the number from the current four to approximately six. In selecting reviewers, we would focus on areas where our expertise is less extensive. For instance, we would seek Deputy editors who specialize in higher education, early childhood, international, comparative, immigration, gender, and areas related to race and ethnicity where we are not as well versed. For example, we have identified higher education scholars like Stella Flores (NYU) and Laura Perna (Penn), researchers who study Latinx education like Roberto Gonzales (Harvard/Penn), immigration scholars like Cynthia Feliciano (Washington University), international and comparative scholars like (Hyunjoon Park, Penn), sociologists who study gender like (Claudia Buchmann, Ohio State), and researchers who study outside of school contexts like Micere Keels (Chicago) and Carla Shedd (CUNY).

We would expect these deputy editors to review certain manuscripts in their expertise areas, but the number of reviews they would conduct would not be large. Instead, we would call on them periodically to consult on the review process more generally, help to select appropriate reviewers for particular manuscripts, and assist us in difficult situations like split external reviewer decisions.

Editorial Board

Strong and committed editorial board members are also essential to a journal’s success. We plan to select the editorial board based on careful consideration of their areas of expertise and how they complement and extend our ability to provide the most rigorous and meaningful feedback to authors. Our expectations for editorial board members will be clear. Each editorial board member would review about six articles per year. We hope to have one editorial board member among the reviews for each manuscript. The editorial board would meet one time per year and would strongly encourage attendance. At these meetings, we will provide board members with updates on the editorial process, seek input on our operations and vision, and seek feedback on areas of improvement. These meetings will be spaces focused on moving the journal forward productively and building relationships and a sense of community among board members.

Efficiency and Transparency in the Editorial Process

SOE has been receiving about 250 submissions per year and accepting less than 10 percent of them. The editorial process has been efficient, averaging about 7.5 weeks from submission to decision between 2012 and 2019. We believe that several practices that we plan to continue would contribute to the timeliness of this process. First, continuing the culture of efficiency established by Rob Warren, and continued by Linda Renzulli, we would ask reviewers to complete their assessments within three weeks. This three-week window would communicate our desire for an efficient process that benefits authors and the journal. As has occurred in the past, we expect to receive excellent work and submissions that lack rigor or are inappropriate for SOE. In response to this pattern, the former editor desk-rejected about 36 percent of manuscripts. We will continue using desk-rejections where appropriate.
As editors, we will provide clear, substantive feedback to authors regarding our decisions and the editorial process more generally. It has become common practice, for example, to send all reviews and the editorial decision to reviewers to make more transparent the work of the editorial team. We will continue this practice and hope to seek additional ways to make the review process transparent for authors by exploring/continuing the use of submission status updates via the submission monitoring system.

Demographic, Methodological, and Substantive Diversity

We possess a deep commitment to diversity concerning authors’ demographic composition and the methodological and substantive areas of scholarship represented in SOE’s pages. To enhance the diversity of contributors, we will begin by infusing our deputy editors and editorial board with scholars from diverse demographic backgrounds who draw on a wide range of substantive and methodological traditions. We will select the editorial team to complement our knowledge and fill in where it is lacking.

Regarding the substantive and methodological diversity, we will seek to build strong relationships across ASA’s sections and encourage submissions for scholars whose work is relevant to SOE but who may not have considered it as a venue. As we wrote above, drawing on subfields that inform the sociology of education could expand the range of potential contributions. While doing this, we would also create a more substantial social media presence to generate interest in published work and encourage more submissions.

Methodologically, we would not privilege any particular approach. However, it is noteworthy that even since 2016 (when submission of qualitative work was encouraged), by our count, about 65 percent of the papers published have been quantitative compared to about 20 percent qualitative and 6 percent mixed method. We do not believe that there is a "right" proportion. Still, we think it is essential to signal a receptiveness to quantitative and qualitative work to attract the broadest and most diverse submissions.

Editors’ Backgrounds

John B. Diamond is the Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education and Professor of Education in ELPA and a faculty affiliate in Afro-American Studies and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Diamond’s work focuses on how social inequality in educational opportunities and outcomes are shaped by educational policies, practices, and leadership. A qualitative sociologist, Diamond draws on the sociology of race, culture, and organizations to advance scholarship on how racial inequality is reproduced and challenged. Having spent his career in interdisciplinary contexts, he is well-versed in education scholarship but grounded in sociology.

Diamond has served on the editorial boards of several sociology and education journals, including Sociology of Education (2009-2012; 2017-2020), the American Educational Research Journal, AERA Open, and the Journal of Negro Education. He co-edited special/symposium issues of Equity & Excellence in Education and Urban Education and served on the Harvard Education Press editorial board from 2008-2013. He has also taken on leadership roles in assessing the quality of scholarship and helping evaluate and support emerging scholars' work. He was a committee member ASA’s Distinguished
Scholarly Book Award Committee (ASA), chaired the Minority Dissertation Fellowship Committee (AERA), the sociology of education section’s David Lee Stevenson Award for outstanding graduate student paper (ASA), and the Association of Black Sociologists Student Paper Competition Committee. He was recently appointed to the Advisory Board of the Sociology Action Network (ASA).

Johnson is a Bloomberg Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University, where he has faculty appointments in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, the School of Education, and in the Department of Sociology. He also directs the NSF Institute in Critical Quantitative, Computational, and Mixed Methodologies (ICQCM). Johnson previously held a joint appointment in the sociology and education departments at Washington University in St. Louis. A quantitative sociologist, Johnson’s work addresses the interrelated mechanisms and effects of residential stratification, race/ethnicity, and social policy (educational, housing, or policing policies). These foci have recently foregrounded his examination of interdependencies between STEM and school-to-prison pipelines for racialized groups in urban high schools, and of housing mobility effects on children’s perceptions of neighborhood and school safety in HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Johnson’s transdisciplinary background would bring an expertise to the editorship in non-school contexts, methodology, STEM/techquity, social policy, and race/ethnicity.

Johnson has served on the editorial boards of prominent sociology and education journals including Social Problems (2018 – present), Sociology of Education (2021 – present), Review of Educational Research (2013 – 2017), and the Urban Review (2005 – present). His service to the American Sociological Association and the American Educational Research Association has frequently involved forming assessments of scholarly work from students and colleagues. He has served as a member of the Palmer O. Johnson Memorial Award for outstanding article of the year (AERA), the Minority Dissertation Fellowship Committee (AERA), the nominating committee for the Sociology of Education Section (ASA), the Government Relations Committee (AERA) which selects the Distinguished Public Service award, and on dozens of scientific review panels for the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Institutional Support

The University of Wisconsin - Madison and Johns Hopkins University have offered their enthusiastic support to us as potential SOE editors. Both institutions view hosting the journal as a valuable opportunity. Both Wisconsin and Hopkins would provide course releases to us while we serve as SOE editors. We will also likely allocate some of our graduate assistants' time to our work on the journal, which would benefit their professional socialization. We have included letters of support from Dean’s Hess (Wisconsin) and Morphew (Johns Hopkins).