

**2015-2016 ASA Council
Meeting by Telephone Conference Call
Tuesday, November 3, 2015**

Final Minutes

Officers Present: Ruth Milkman (President), Barbara Risman (Vice President, joined at 1:30pm), Michele Lamont (President-elect), Kathleen Gerson (Vice President-elect), Paula England (Past President), Mary Romero (Secretary), David Takeuchi (Secretary-elect)

Officers Absent: Cecilia Menjivar, Past Vice President

Members-at-Large Present: Daniel Chambliss, Cynthia Feliciano, Tina Fetner, Adia M. Harvey Wingfield, Peter Kivisto, Leslie McCall, Mignon R. Moore, Wendy Ng, Patricia E. White

Members-at Large Absent: Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, Margaret Hunter, Karyn Lacy

Staff Present: John Curtis, Sally T. Hillsman (Executive Officer), Margaret Weigers Vitullo

1. Introductions

President Ruth Milkman opened the telephone conference call of the 2015-2016 Council at 2:00 pm EST on Tuesday, November 3, 2015. The attendance roll was called; a quorum was present. The four item agenda had been sent previously by email to Council with supporting documents.

2. Proposed ASA statement on campus carry gun laws

President Milkman introduced a statement that was published by the American Political Science Association (APSA) on October 15, 2015, in response to a new state law in Texas that permits concealed handguns to be carried on the campuses of Texas universities. This law, and the fact that other states appear to be expanding their state gun laws to permit concealed carry on campuses, has attracted wide concern among university professors because of its implications for their safety and that of their students and for freedom of expression on campus. According to Executive Officer Hillsman, there is a move among scholarly societies that are members of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), as is APSA and ASA, to add their organizational support to the APSA statement.

Motion: Council approves making ASA a signatory to the following “APSA Statement on Campus Carry”:

The American Political Science Association is deeply concerned about the impact of Texas’s new Campus Carry law on freedom of expression in Texas universities. The law, which was passed earlier this year and takes effect in 2016, allows licensed handgun carriers to bring concealed handguns into buildings on Texas campuses. The APSA is concerned that the Campus Carry law and similar laws in other states introduce serious safety threats on college campuses with a resulting harmful effect on professors and students.

Carried unanimously.

3. Proposed Task Force Contingent Faculty

President Milkman proposed that Council create a Task Force on Contingent Faculty in recognition of the concern among members of the Association and the discipline for both sociology and the larger higher education community. She noted that John Curtis, Director of the ASA Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, has been following and studying this issue for a number of years in his previous position at AAUP, and that there was also a resolution on contingent faculty issues approved by the ASA Business Meeting on August 25, 2015.

Milkman asked Executive Officer Hillsman to remind Council of the process for establishing a task force. Hillsman said that if Council votes to have a task force and confirms its charge, the task force would be announced in the next issue of *Footnotes* with a request for member volunteers to serve on the task force. The ASA President would appoint a small group of Council members to review the list of volunteers and select the number of people that are necessary to carry out the charge. John Curtis would be the ASA staff liaison to the task force and the President would select a Council liaison. Vice President Gerson asked if there were any members of Council that objected to this task force, and since there were none, President Milkman turned to a discussion of the proposed charge to the task force.

After discussion of the proposed charge, the following motion was voted on:

Motion: Council establishes a three-year *Task Force on Contingent Faculty* with the following charge:

In response to the “Resolution in Support of Contingent Faculty Remuneration” passed at the ASA Business meeting in August 2015, and based on preliminary research by John Curtis, Director of the ASA Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, Council establishes a new three-year Task Force (TF) on Contingent Faculty and calls for member volunteers.

The charge to this TF is to explore the dynamics and implications of the recent growth of contingent employment among sociologists in the context of the broader structural transformations now underway in U.S. universities and in comparison to other disciplines.

The TF is asked to examine and document:

- *Employment trends:* the growth of lectureships, adjuncts, and part-time teaching jobs, and the extent to which such contingent positions are replacing traditional tenure-track positions;
- *Conditions of employment:* wages, benefits, security, stability, teaching loads, extent of involvement in teaching graduate-level courses, support from teaching assistants, unionization, etc.;
- *Position of contingent faculty in the university:* relationship to graduate students, other faculty, and administration (e.g., inclusion in departmental deliberations and in other forums of shared governance);
- *Careers:* how individual sociologists came to be contingent faculty, the demographic composition of contingent faculty compared to those in traditional tenure-track or tenured positions, the extent to which contingent faculty are actively seeking full-time tenure-track employment, their ability to carry out scholarly research, their experience to date, and how they see their futures; and
- *Consequences for higher education:* how the growth of contingent employment affects the quality of classroom teaching and the education of students; how it affects academic freedom.

The Task Force will also review past and present efforts of other scholarly associations to address these issues, and make recommendations to ASA Council as to how the Association field can best address the challenge these developments present to our field.

Carried unanimously.

4. Report of the Council Subcommittee on Ethnography

Because Karyn Lacy could not be present on this conference call, President-elect Lamont, a member of the subcommittee, reminded Council that it had established the subcommittee at its August 2015 meeting. It was charged with exploring ways in which the association might stimulate dialog within the discipline about the methodology and practice of ethnography and ethical issues that arise from ethnographic research. This subcommittee arose from the concern among some Council members that there had been recent, sometimes not well informed, discussions within the “blogosphere” and in the national media about ethnography but that ASA had not as yet initiated any fora for professional discussion. Karyn Lacy was appointed chair of a subcommittee to explore possible options for Council’s consideration; it included President-elect Lamont, Vice President Risman, and Member-at-Large Golash-Boza as members with Executive Officer Hillsman and staff sociologist Margaret Weigers Vitullo as staff liaisons.

Lamont reported that the subcommittee had met and discussed various options and that it was scheduled to meet again in ten days to review members’ exploration of these options in order to make recommendations to Council as soon as possible.

One option being explored, Lamont reported, is a professional workshop at the 2016 Annual Meeting in Seattle. Another is approaching the editors of *Contexts* magazine about whether they would be interested in hosting a conversation about ethnography, the practice of ethnography, ethical questions arising from such practice, or related matters. Lamont said that she was asked by the subcommittee to approach the editors about this idea, making it clear to them that because all ASA editors have full autonomy and editorial control over the intellectual content of the journals, neither the subcommittee nor Council was going beyond soliciting the editors’ interest as any other sociologist or group of sociologists might do with any ASA editor.

Lamont indicated that she had done so on behalf of the subcommittee and would report back to it at their upcoming meeting. In the meantime, however, the subcommittee wanted to let Council know about the possibility of a *Contexts* initiated discussion and elicit any responses from other Council members about this possibility.

Council discussed the idea, liked it, and strongly reaffirmed the subcommittee’s intent to be absolutely clear with the *Contexts* editors that this was a suggestion for the editors to consider and to ignore or implement as they decided was best for the journal. Lamont reported that the *Context* editors were initially interested in the idea and had begun crafting a possible announcement for a special forum on ethnography and sociological practice that would help develop and maintain professional standards for the best quality research. The editors had several ideas about essays they might commission from a range of experts, possibly including a couple from fields other than sociology.

Council’s discussion was favorable about this basic idea with some voicing the view that a focus on issues about ethnographic practice in general was a good idea and that,

should the editors decide to move forward, participants in the *Contexts* discussion would undoubtedly identify specific issues and concerns. Council also explored briefly whether the subcommittee could consider if NSF might be open to sponsoring a workshop on ethnographic research in sociology as it had done in the 2000s on qualitative research. (Lamont and White were leaders of that workshop.) President Milkman indicated that the 2016 Program Committee would be open to considering a proposal for a professional workshop on ethnography in 2016 and invited the subcommittee's suggestions for its content.

Council concluded its discussion by asking Lamont to let the subcommittee know that Council looked forward to discussing the specific proposals the subcommittee formulates at its next meeting, including seeing what announcement, if any, the *Contexts* editors decide upon and what the 2016 Program Committee decides about program sessions for Seattle.

5. Request for ASA to consider signing an amicus brief

President Milkman alerted Council that Past President England had been approached by staff at the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) asking whether the ASA Council would consider signing a research based *amicus curiae* brief in an important case on abortion and mental health if that case is taken by the Supreme Court. The Court will announce its decision November 6, 2015, and if it grants cert the briefs would be due on December 31, 2015. CRR hopes the American Psychological Association (APA) will take the lead in preparing the brief because much of the research is by psychologists, although much of the central research on women's post-abortion attitudes, feelings, and emotions that would likely be included has been done by a sociologist.

England provided Council with an outline of the specific research sources likely to be covered in the brief. Council reviewed the outline and then asked England to consult with knowledgeable colleagues and review this research in order to help guide Council on whether the amicus brief is likely to reach Council's threshold for signing on behalf of the Association should Council need to make a decision in December.

There being no other business before Council, President Milkman adjourned the meeting at 3:15 pm EST.