

Minutes from the Committee on Publications Meeting

August 23, 2015

Hilton Chicago, Chicago, IL

Elected members present were Jennifer Barber (Chair), Kathleen Blee, Douglas Hartmann, Erin Kelly, Annette Lareau (past ASA President), Mary Romero (ASA Secretary), Vincent Roscigno, and Amy Wharton. Also present were incoming members Matthew Hunt and Claire Renzetti and Secretary-Elect David Takeuchi.

Editors present for the open session were Syed Ali (*Contexts*), Lee Clarke (Rose), Gilbert Gee (*JHSB*), Larry Isaac (*ASR*), Tim Liao (*SM*), Michael Sauder (*CS*), Richard Serpe and Jan Stets (*SPQ*), Stephen Sweet (*TS*), and Rob Warren (*SOE*). Incoming editors Duane Alwin (*SM*), Mustafa Emirbayer (*ST*), and Omar Lizardo, Rory McVeigh, and Sara Mustillo (all *ASR*) also attended.

Present from the Executive Office were Sally T. Hillsman (Executive Officer), Karen Gray Edwards (Director of Publications and Membership), John Curtis (Director of Research), and Rachel Pines (Publications Assistant).

Approval of the Agenda. The meeting agenda was approved without modification.

Report of the Chair. Barber introduced newly elected Committee members (Hunt and Renzetti), who will begin service in December 2015, as well as Pines, who will be taking the minutes for the first time as a new ASA staff member. This particular meeting will be audio recorded, but only for assistance in producing the minutes.

She noted that it was Kelly and Roscigno's last meeting as Committee members, and Lareau would be rotating off as Past President. In addition, she noted the current editors of the *American Sociological Review*, *Sociological Methodology*, and *Sociological Theory* were also attending their last Committee meeting. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the outgoing members' and editors' service.

Report of the Executive Officer.

Hillsman reported that the ASA membership had overwhelmingly approved the referendum to expand the Committee from six to nine elected members (in addition to the current ASA Secretary and Past President). The expansion will gradually occur over the next three years and will provide the Committee with increased capability to oversee the expanding stable of ASA journals, as well as to consider more overarching issues of concern.

The grant from the National Science Foundation to transform 20 years of paper records into a usable research archive has been approved and work has begun. A small advisory committee will be established to assist the research team at George Mason University and the ASA Executive Office.

Hillsman spoke briefly about the plan for the new Executive Officer search as she has decided to retire in May 2016. She also updated the Committee on the progress on the *Contexts* reader on gender and sexuality, to be edited by outgoing editors Jodi O'Brien and Arlene Stein and published by SAGE.

Report of the Secretary. Romero provided an overview of the report on journal subscriptions to be presented to Council. As anticipated, the member benefit providing online access to all ASA journals has resulted in a decline in paid member subscriptions, but there has been significant growth in institutional subscriptions, primarily through consortia and bundling arrangements.

Subscription rates for the following year have to be finalized prior to the August meetings of the Committee on Publications and ASA Council. The ASA Secretary has the authority to review and approve those prices on Council's behalf and the rates for 2016 have already been finalized.

Romero reported on the process for searching for a new ASA Executive Officer, as Hillsman plans to retire in May 2016. ASA has grown in significant ways under Hillsman's leadership, so her shoes will be difficult to fill, but a search firm will be hired to assist ASA through the difficult process of finding a replacement.

Review of Future Editorial Records Archiving Policy Survey. A survey is being finalized to get member input on whether the ASA should change its policy on the retention of journal manuscripts and reviews. Specifically, the Committee wants to ask whether, should the decision be made to retain the materials for research purposes, that would affect authors' and reviewers' willingness to submit and review manuscripts to ASA journals (even if there was an opt out to having materials retained). As was clear in the discussions about the 500+ boxes of historical editorial records from 1990-2009, many scholars feel these records are vitally important for research on the history of the discipline and the sociology of knowledge. The Committee approved a draft survey at its last meeting in December 2014, which was then modified by the ASA Research Department. Curtis presented the revised survey and answered questions about the revisions.

Report from SAGE Publications. Thomas Mankowski of SAGE reported that ASA has a very strong institutional subscriber base and usage of the ASA journals is extremely strong. ASA journals have had half a million downloads already in 2015 and will likely reach a million or more by the end of the year. Every ASA journal has shown growth from 2014. The *American Sociological Review* is again ranked the top journal in sociology using impact factor and citation data.

Journal Editor Nominations

The Committee submitted names for individuals who should receive invitations to apply for the editorships of the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* and *Sociology of Education* for 2017-2019. These individuals will receive formal letters of invitation to apply, and an open call will be published online and in *Footnotes*. The Committee created subcommittees for each journal to ensure an adequate pool of candidates, to review applications, and to present the Committee with an overview and pre-ranking in December. Wharton will chair the *SOE* subcommittee with Hunt and Warren as members; Barber will chair the *JHSB* subcommittee with members Renzetti and Gee.

Update on *Socius*. Edwards reported that the new open access journal was now accepting manuscripts; a flyer had been included in the meeting materials for all attendees. The editors (Lisa Keister and James Moody) are committed to publishing high quality, innovative, rigorously-reviewed scientific research with quick decisions (and limited revise and resubmits). As the journal is online only, it is not bound to page limits of printed journals.

Change in *Sociological Theory* Mission Statement. Editor Neil Gross has modified the mission statement that appears on the *ST* website. This mission statement needs to be reviewed by the Committee and formally approved if acceptable. The proposed new mission statement is:

Sociological Theory (ST) publishes work in all areas of theory, including substantive theories, history of theories, metatheory, formal theory construction, and synthetic contributions. Although aimed at a sociological readership, its orientation is pluralistic and it welcomes contributions by scholars in other fields. Peer reviewed and published quarterly, *Sociological Theory* is renowned for featuring the best international research and scholarship.

Incoming editor Mustafa Emirbayer supports the revision.

New Model and Vision for *Contexts*. New editors Ali and Cohen have proposed an examination of the current publication model of *Contexts* to consider whether ASA can continue its outstanding performance but reach a broader audience through a new publication model and business plan. They (and prior editors) have been frustrated by the inability to share content more broadly with interested audiences due to the current financial model which restricts access due to a traditional subscription model required for revenue neutrality. While the finances are relatively stable at this point, the current model severely restricts the distribution of content to the audiences *Contexts* has always intended to reach, but are unlikely to subscribe in a traditional way.

The editors suggested creating a subcommittee to do the “big picture” thinking about whether there are other models to support the magazine with new revenue streams while broadening the ability to bring content to the public arena. While they are sensitive to EOB and Council’s eye on cost-neutrality that is required of ASA’s traditional journals, it is time to consider other models (including those that may eliminate the printed magazine).

While the SAGE agreement restricts such innovative thinking because of the structure of publication, SAGE was the only publisher that expressed interest when ASA issued a RFP several years ago and they are providing the majority of the funds to support *Contexts*. SAGE is not opposed to different models, or ASA moving away from that publishing partnership if it is in the best interests of ASA and *Contexts*, but any discussion of new models will have to include examination of the cost of those models.

There was broad consensus that the current model is not “right” for *Contexts* and the Committee approved of moving forward to rethink the *Contexts* model. Instead of a subcommittee of the Committee on Publications, however, they proposed a joint committee of the Committee on Publications, Council, the Executive Office and Budget Committee, and the Task Force on Engaging Sociology. This recommendation will go forward to Council.

The Committee understood that this action would require an additional one-year extension of the current publication agreement between SAGE and ASA. The Executive Office anticipates SAGE will be agreeable to that to allow the ASA to proceed with careful and extensive deliberation.

Report and Recommendations of the Subcommittee on Ethics Related to Research in Journal Articles. Subcommittee chair Blee provided background information on its charge to address a range of ethical issues that should be addressed when authors submit manuscripts to ASA journals, including whether the research described in the manuscript was conducted with IRB approval. The subcommittee recommended that authors be asked to provide statements on the following and that the submission software for each ASA journal be modified accordingly:

- (1) Did the research have IRB approval, if required by your institution? Your answer will not appear in the published article.
- (2) For authors who are currently or plan to share the data in this article with the larger scholarly community, please indicate how these data can be accessed. Your statement will appear as a footnote in the published article. Since data sharing is optional, please skip this item if you do not plan to share your data publicly.
- (3) Provide details of any grants or contracts awarded from sources outside of your university or institution to fund this research. This statement will appear as a footnote in the published article. Leave blank if the research had no funding from sources outside your institution.
- (4) Provide details of any conflicts of interest in the research or funding. This statement will appear as a footnote in the published article. Leave blank if the research involved no conflicts of interest.

These questions will include links to specific relevant portions of the current ASA *Code of Ethics* that address each item.

Report and Recommendations of Subcommittee on the ASA Publications Portfolio. The subcommittee, chaired by Romero, was charged with developing criteria for an annual examination of the portfolio of ASA journals; establishing guidelines to compensate ASA for work conducted for section journals; and reviewing the *Guidelines on the ASA Publications Portfolio* for “housekeeping” edits.

Hillsman stressed that the Committee needs to work independently to review gaps in ASA journals, and not wait until a section proposes a journal to fill a need.

Romero noted that with four section journals, and one (*City & Community*) close to earning royalties, the question has been raised whether it is time to consider whether ASA should be compensated for staff time spent on section journals, particularly since they are close to a third of the overall work related to journals and the staff may need to be expanded.

Also, when the *Guidelines* were initially developed nearly 15 years ago, the assumption was that section editors would be bound to the same term limits as ASA editors, but that is not directly addressed in the *Guidelines*. In addition, the *Guidelines* do not currently give the Committee any direct authority over the selection of section journal editors, and some Committee members have wondered whether that is prudent.

The Subcommittee is continuing its work, but does recommend that the *Guidelines* be modified now to make section editor term limits consistent with that of ASA journals.

The Committee charged the Subcommittee with generating a list of questions for discussion and possible recommendation for the December 2015 meeting.

Report and Recommendations of the Subcommittee on Guidelines for Journal Reviews. Subcommittee chair Hartmann reported that their charge was to consider how to implement routine reviews of ASA journals as well as to better connect and support ASA’s editors.

The current *Guidelines on the ASA Publications Portfolio* have fairly reasonable and comprehensive details on routine reviews; what needs discussion is how to incorporate this into the work of the Committee in a way that those reviews can provide useful information prior to the selection of new

editors. The Executive Office already provides the Committee with other journal data related to manuscript submission, decisions, and articles published. Other data (such as impact factor, finances, and annual reports) could easily be added to what is presented each August. The data data could be used by the editor selection subcommittees to conduct a routine review to be presented at the subsequent December meeting prior to the selection of the next editor. Should the review indicate minor deficiencies or areas for improvement, those can discussed with the incoming editor. Should the review indicate major areas of concern, the Committee could initiate a more in-depth review independent of the editor selection process.

The subcommittee also asked whether assigning each journal editor with a Committee member “liaison” might help when issues arise within the editorial office or within the Publications Committee about that particular journal. This recommendation was not supported after discussion by the Committee.

Review of Proposed New Annual Editor Report Table. At the December 2014 meeting, Warren’s subcommittee proposed a new annual editor report table structure. The Committee voted to asked editors to prepare both the current and the proposed table for the 2014 year and have both for review at this meeting. The Committee discussed the new table, with some editors noting difficulty in preparing it and asking, should it become the new reporting standard, that the ASA Executive Office work with SAGE to automate the production of the table.

Review of Journals Submission and Publication Data. Data on the number of manuscripts submitted, acceptance rates, article page length, and use of page allocations are presented each August for the Committee’s routine review as well as its use in considering requests for additional pages.

Edwards reported that *Sociological Methodology* editor Tim Liao had submitted a request for 40 additional pages for the 2015 volume. Due to the production schedule, this request had to be considered prior to the Committee’s full meeting. The request was submitted to Barber on behalf of the Committee on Publications and formally approved by Mary Romero on behalf of the Executive Office and Budget Committee and ASA Council.

ASA Style: Gender-Neutral Pronouns. Barber as Committee chair had received a question from the ASA Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons in Sociology about whether ASA journals have a policy on authors’ use of gender-neutral pronouns. The issue had arisen with an author who does not identify as either male or female and preferred to use “they” rather than he or she. While there is no action to be taken at this meeting, the Committee was briefed that there may be a proposal coming to it to modify ASA style on this issue at some point in the near future.

New Business

Gee noted that ASA style did not appear to allow for exceptions when the legal name of an institution “violated” that style, as is the case with his own institution. Edwards will add this to the list of items for consideration for the next edition of the *ASA Style Guide*

Lareau briefed the Committee on an idea from the Task Force on Engaging Sociology to help publicize sociological research in ASA journals by asking all authors to write a second abstract that is more engaging (similar to the “media friendly” abstracts that *ASR* prepares) that would be available in order to promote articles in a broader way that is receptive to social media. While there was some enthusiasm for the concept, there was a concern that most articles are not necessarily going to be promoted in this

way and it could be creating an unrealistic expectation to authors (and an additional burden). There was no action taken on the idea, but the Committee may revisit it in the future.

Barber reported that the December 2015 meeting will be held December 10-11, 2015.

Editors were excused with the appreciation of the Committee, which entered Executive Session.

Executive Session.

The Committee voted to:

- Approve the proposed change in the *Sociological Theory* mission statement.
- Request an additional one-year extension (through 2017) of the current contract with SAGE Publications to publish *Contexts* to provide ASA the opportunity to consider alternative publication models.
- Establish a joint subcommittee of Council, the Committee on Publications, the Task Force on Social Media, the ASA Secretary (representing the Executive Office and Budget Committee) and ASA staff, with the charge of identifying alternative revenue-neutral models for *Contexts* in light of its original mission to have more public presence and engagement.
- Approve recommendations from the Subcommittee on Ethics Related to Research in Journal Articles to modify all journal submission sites to ask authors to include short statements on IRB approval, research funding, conflicts of interest, and data sharing.
- Approve the recommendation of the Subcommittee on the ASA Publications Portfolio that section journals editor terms be the same as that of ASA journal editors.
- Incorporate a routine review into the schedule for selecting new editors, with the Executive Office preparing materials for each August and the selection subcommittees presenting an overview as part of their report to the Committee each December prior to the selection of new editors.
- Charge outgoing chair Jennifer Barber with working with the ASA Research Department to simplify the proposed survey to ASA members on the retention of personally-identified manuscripts and reviews for use in future scholarly research.
- Approve the new expanded table to accompany annual editor reports, effective with the 2015 volume year and ask the ASA Executive Office to work with SAGE to automate the production of the table to reduce the impact on editors.
- Approve nominations for new ASA journal editorial board members.
- Appoint Kathleen Blee as the new chair of the Committee on Publications.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.