

Memorandum

To: SSSP Board of Directors

From: Kimberly J. Cook, Chair: Ad hoc Committee on Long Range Planning

Re: Report from the Committee

August 11, 2004

Background

On August 17, 2003, the Board established this committee and charged us “to consider the issues of revenue development, meeting form and structure of the SSSP Organization, and how we can provide service to members and the public in the 21st Century, present a report to the Board at the 2004 meeting, and explore the possibility of a retreat of the board to consider these issues.”

Since then the composition of the committee has been established and includes the following people: Kimberly J. Cook (chair), Karl Bryant, Kathleen Ferraro, Susan Carlson, Donald Cunnigan, Nelta Edwards, Martha Hargraves, Bob Perrucci, and Claire Renzetti. Our first task was to consider Susan Carlson’s report on the financial condition of the Society, as solicited by the chair of this committee. Major areas of concern based on this report include:

- * decline in membership dues, particularly among early career sociologists
- * unknown impact of electronic availability of *Social Problems*
- * hotel contracts for future meetings of the Society
- * printing and postage expenses of paper-version documents
- * transitions in key offices (executive office and editorial office)
- * overall the Society is financially sound, and in order to remain so, we need examine issues related to membership, circulation, expense and administration.

Responses to the report varied and led to a fuller conversation on the items listed below. We met formally on August 11, 2004. We began with an update on Susan Carlson’s report. Since that report was written, revenue has increased, and this year’s annual conference is well-attended. Cost-containment remains an important concern and could be facilitated through electronic distribution of the newsletter, the annual program and other routine mailings. Still, financial well-being of the Society is not the only consideration.

Revenue Development

A main consideration is in the area of membership recruitment and retention. Nelta Edwards and Karl Bryant have co-chaired the membership committee and reported that they had done a targeted membership drive by sending brochures to members of the American Sociological Association (not successful), the American Society of Criminology (also not successful), and Law and Society (most successful), among others. Other ideas were discussed, including what an early career sociologist gains by joining the Society. In some academic departments participating in SSSP may not be valued as highly as participating in other professional associations and some departments might discourage their members from being active in this Society.

How can we make ourselves more useful to the early career sociologist? **We recommend a more active annual meeting program with workshops on various topics (some of which we have**

already done): constructing a CV, going on the job market, promotion and tenure, publishing in various venues, writing a book, grant writing, etc. Unlike ASA's didactic seminars, we should NOT have special fees associated with these workshops. We also should include a mechanism for evaluating the utility of these workshops for those who attend.

Because one of the main objectives for early career members is building a community of supportive colleagues, we discussed inviting an eminent scholar/activist to present a special lecture geared toward early career members of SSSP with a special reception to follow where they could engage with the eminent scholar/activist on a variety of topics. We believe that such a person would best serve the Society if s/he is actively engaged in pursuing the social justice goals of SSSP.

We discussed renaming the "Lifetime Members" category to "Sustaining Members" as some institutions would pay for the membership dues in more discrete categories, but not for an entire 'lifetime' of one member. In doing this, someone would be able to make more than one contribution to the Society.

We discussed redesigning the website to emphasize more of the activism of the Society and our numerous Awards. The newsletter should also be put on line, with people being informed that if they want a hard copy mailed to them, they could simply request it. The newsletter should also carry more news about the activism among our members and the awards we provide activist organizations. We discussed a new column devoted to highlighting one scholar/activist in every issue. We also discussed that the website and the newsletter would be a good place to compile a list of new ph.d. completions, new jobs, new books/publications, winners of student paper competitions, and other celebrations of our members. **We recommend enhancing the website and the newsletter in these ways.**

We unanimously recommend free membership to people within the first year of completing their doctorates. Also, a letter from the Society's President to congratulate the completion and offer the first year free membership in the Society.

Cost Containment

We recommend electronic distribution of routine mailings including newsletter and annual program. Hard copies can be available on site.

We recommend that the Elections Committee consider the pros and cons of electronic ballots for future elections in order to save on postage and paper costs. We realize there could be overriding benefits to the paper version.

Issues related to Electronic Availability of *Social Problems*

A significant proportion of our membership does not attend the annual meeting and yet remain active in order to obtain their hard copy of the journal. When the availability converts to exclusively electronic version, no one knows for sure how this will affect the Society and our membership revenue. **We strongly recommend that the Editorial and Publications committee study this issue and develop a set of recommendations around how to minimize**

any economic loss to the Society. We also have to keep in mind that we offer more than the journal to our members. For example, Martha Hargraves suggested a model similar to that of the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine for Women, who tap in to deans, provosts, presidents, and other administrative leaders for support, mentoring, guidance, and collaboration.

Future of SSSP

Of particular concern here is the question of separating from ASA place/date schedules. **It is the strong and unanimous recommendation of this committee to retain our existing arrangements with the ASA host city and date for our annual meetings.**

We discussed the current structural arrangements of the Society with the University of Tennessee, the host to our Executive Office. UT has experienced some transitions recently within the Department, the College, and the University. While the contracts are sound and in place and no major change is occurring in the immediate future, we recommend that the Board keep a close watch on these relationships. The Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee (PO&SPC) is charged with developing “proposals for the improvement of the organization and operation of the Society,” and initiating “the process of planning new goals and future development of the Society.” **We recommend that a conversation take place among the following officials: chair of the PO&SPC, chair of the Long Range Planning Committee, President, President-elect, Past-President, and Treasurer.** The purposes of this conversation would be to develop a method of monitoring the structural arrangements of the Society, the Executive Office, and the host institution and to envision for the transitions that may be approaching.

We discussed the role of the Divisions within the Society. We are concerned about the current utility of the Divisions. We would like to receive more information from the Council of Division Chairs as to the activities within the Divisions, membership numbers, and achievements.

Service to Members and the Public

This topic was largely prompted by the question of separating from the ASA host city/date. Because we strongly recommend against such a separation, we see these questions as less pressing. Furthermore, many of the ideas already expressed overlap with what we offer to our members and to the public.

Board Retreat

It is the consensus of this committee that any decisions made about having a Board retreat need to be made by the Board, not by this committee.

Reauthorization of the Ad Hoc Long Range Planning Committee

We request that this committee be re-authorized for another year’s service to the Society. We will maintain the current membership and would request that a student representative to the Board also join this committee.

Thank you.