

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

James A. Holstein, Editor
Jodi Rusch, Editorial Coordinator
Cathy Morrell, Administrative Assistant

Stephen L. Franzoi, Associate Editor
Carol A. Archbold, Deputy Editor
Crystal Mueller, Production Editor

To: SSSP Board of Directors
Editorial and Publications Committee
Advisory Editors

From: James A. Holstein, Editor, *Social Problems*

RE: 2004-2005 Annual Editor's Report

Date: 5 July 2005

This report documents the activities of the editorial offices and staff at Marquette University from 1 June 2004 to 31 May 2005.

Operation: The editorial offices at Marquette continued to function efficiently and effectively, thanks to the conscientious professional efforts of the editorial team: Jodi Rush, Editorial Coordinator; Crystal Mueller, Production Editor; Stephen Franzoi, Associate Editor; and Carol Archbold, Deputy Editor.

The Marquette offices again operated under budget for the past year.

All issues were delivered to the printer on schedule, and were in print and mailed during or before the month of the issue.

Changes. There were no major changes in the operation of the journal over the past year. We have continued to move towards "all electronic" processing of manuscripts, with good success.

Manuscript Traffic, Review Process, and Decisions. The number of manuscripts processed and the disposition of submissions are summarized in the table that follows.

The Marquette office processed 354 submissions in 2004-2005 (not including the "Presidential Address" and introductions to "special sections"). [The total number of submissions for the calendar year 2004 was 351.] Once again, this is the largest number of submissions in over a decade.

The acceptance rate for *Social Problems* this year was 8.8 percent, which closely approximates acceptance rates over the past decade.

The “turn-around” time for manuscripts submitted to the Marquette offices continues to be good. On average, a manuscript undergoing full review receives a decision within nine weeks from submission (*mean*=62.3 days, *median*=64 days). We continue to generate about 3.8 reviews per submission. I’m frankly surprised that we have not fallen off from previous years. Jodi and I have certainly felt like the volume has increased and our subjective sense was that we were not keeping pace with prior standards. Our tracking statistics prove us wrong.

The editorial office has worked on three “special sections” in the past year. The first (“Residential Segregation in the Post Civil Rights Era”) emerged from unsolicited submissions. We had the good fortune of having several good submissions and when three papers were eventually accepted, Douglas Massey graciously accepted my invitation to write a short introduction to the section. The second special section—“Language, Interaction, and Social Problems—is in production and scheduled to appear in the November 2005 issue. Don Zimmerman and Jay Gubrium have kindly agreed to write introductions. A third special section—“Institutional Ethnography”—is currently in progress. I’m optimistic that we will fill this section. I would like to thank the following people for their assistance with the special sections: Marj DeVault, Tim Diamond, Paul Luken, Doug Maynard, and Greg Squires.

Transition. The transition of the editorial offices to Washington State University and new team of Editor Amy Wharton and Associate Editors Lisa Catanzarite, Clayton Mosher, and Nella Van Dyke is proceeding smoothly. Amy visited Marquette in the spring to observe the current set-up and procedures. In May, Jodi Rusch went to Vancouver to install our manuscript tracking software and instruct the new editorial staff in its use. Jodi and Crystal Mueller very thoroughly documented the procedures we have developed at Marquette and passed them along to the new editorial team. I have every confidence that the new team will fully and quickly implement the system, and I’m sure they will continue to build upon and improve the system that the Irvine team so industriously developed.

Wrapping Up. My term as Editor is just about up. The Marquette team will continue through production of the November 2005 issue and will pass along approximately 10 accepted manuscripts to the WSU offices. I’d like to close by noting the following accomplishments over the past three years:

- **Change in *Social Problems* “Reference” format.** We now use the ASA and this is much easier on authors and our production staff.
- **Special sections.** We are in the process of publishing our third “special section.” I think the ideas of soliciting submissions on special topics is a good way of promoting interest in particular areas and of bringing visibility to research and scholarship in these areas. Special sections have many of the virtues of “special issues” without most of the drawbacks.
- **Improved manuscript processing.** Largely through Jodi’ Rusch’s diligent efforts, the *Social Problems* manuscript processing system has been vastly upgraded and is poised for even further improvement. The Irvine editorial team led by David Smith did a wonderful job of bringing the journal into the 21st century and presented us with a well-functioning system and a substantial reviewer data base. Over the past three years, we have more than doubled the size of this data base. We have also made significant strides towards an “all electronic” manuscript submission and processing system. Changes in this direction must proceed delicately and incrementally. We are a business that relies on the highly skilled, but unpaid, labor of a volunteer work force. We need to remember constantly that peer reviewers put great time, effort, and intellectual investment into the

manuscript review process. Making unreasonable demands or foisting unwanted changes on them is surely bad practice. Over the past three years, we have given reviewers their choice of receiving manuscripts and submitting reviews electronically. At the start, most requested hard copies of manuscripts and mailed in reviews. By early 2005, about half of our reviewers request electronic copies of manuscripts and more than 75 percent of reviews are returned via e-mail. This greatly reduces time and cost. The new WSU editorial team is preparing to make even more extensive use of electronic communication. I would not be surprised if, at the end of the next three years, *Social Problems* business is conducted almost entirely electronically.

- **Increased submissions.** We have received nearly 700 submissions over the past two years. I have no good explanation for this. Perhaps our relatively short “turn-around” time is responsible. I also suspect that the rise in submission is part of cyclical trends that defy explanation. There is every reason to hope for this trend to continue. In addition, *Social Forces* has recently begun to turn away submissions in criminology, public health, and urban planning and some of those are surely going to come our way.
- **Quality scholarship, written well.** *Social Problems* continues to publish first rate scholarship. Of course this is mainly due to the diligent and creative work of the authors. I am continually gratified to see how responsive *Social Problems* authors are to constructive criticism and how much papers grow and improve through the peer reviewer process. Our (now enormous) pool of reviewers also makes a tremendous contribution. I think it’s safe to say that *Social Problems* reviewers provide the best, most useful feedback in our disciplines. Not each time and not every time, but its rare for a submission not to benefit from at least one (if not three or four) truly insightful, helpful review. Finally, *Social Problems*’ long tradition of well-written scholarship has been in good hands. For the most part, *Social Problems* authors write well and care about the quality of their texts. Production Editors Crystal Mueller and Caroline Goyette treated each manuscript with rigorous, but loving, care, fighting the good fight against the well-earned reputation that social scientists have amassed for torturing the English language.

Thank yous. Finally, I’d like to thank the following people for their unflinching support, good will, and ready cooperation over the past three years: Rebecca Simon, Rebekah Darksmith, Susanna Tadlock, Cheryl Owen Swope, Jason Orlovich, Marge Dean, Gabriel Alvaro, and Darcy Dapra of the University of California Press, and Leslie Sanborn and the staff at Asterisk Typographics. The Board of Advisory Editors has been immensely helpful. The Editorial and Publications Committee has been wonderfully supportive. I want especially to thank Leon Anderson, Nancy Naples, Anna Santiago, Steve Couch, Maggie Andersen, Pat Yancey Martin, and Kim Cook. As always, Tom Hood is rock-solid in his support. Until you have worked with her, you cannot fathom how helpful and valuable Michele Smith Koontz is to the SSSP. Once you have worked with her, you know that you could not have done it without her.

It’s virtually obligatory to thank one’s staff for their good service over the years. I need to upgrade this note of gratitude to make it absolutely clear that “my people” at Marquette are beyond compare. I absolutely defy anyone to find better people to work with than Jodi Rusch, Crystal Mueller and Caroline Goyette. I could not be more pleased, proud, and grateful to have worked with them.

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Manuscript Traffic and Editorial Decisions

June 1, 2004 to May 31, 2005

| Decision | Original Submissions | Revised Submissions | Total | Percent | Mean Days to Decision |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Accept | 0 | 31 | 31 | 8.8 % | 6.6 |
| R&R /Expedite Review | 0 | 40 | 40 | 11.3% | 41.6 |
| Revise & Resubmit | 53 | 9 | 62 | 17.5% | 67.2 |
| Reject | 135 | 23 | 158 | 44.6% | 65.6 |
| Deflect | 44 | 0 | 44 | 12.4% | 7.2 |
| Total Reviewed | 232 | 103 | 335 | | 49.8 |
| Currently Under Review | 11 | 8 | 19 | 5.4% | |
| Total Submissions | 243 | 111 | 354 | | |

Acceptance Rate: 8.8%

Mean Days to Decision (full review): 62.3

Median Days to Decision (full review): 64.0

Reviews Per Manuscript (for those undergoing full review): 3.8

Editorial Activity

Reviews Solicited: 1970
Reviews: 979
Reviewer Consent Rate: 50%
Reviewers in Database: 5045 (887 added in 2004-05)