15 July 2003

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

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

RE: 2002-2003 Annual Editor's Report
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This report documents the activities of the editorial offices and staff at Marquette University from 1 June 2003 to 31 May 2003.

Transition. The Marquette office began accepting manuscripts on 1 June 2002. The transition from the Irvine office was nearly seamless from my point of view. David Smith and the Irvine team helped me establish the Marquette office and install the newly-developed manuscript review tracking system without a hitch. David and I agreed that he would continue to work with manuscripts that were in process or under review for the remainder of 2002. The objective was twofold: 1) to provide continuity and consistency for manuscripts currently under review, and 2) to provide manuscripts for publication in the first issue of 2003. We accomplished both. I believe it is virtually impossible to generate six to eight publishable manuscripts in the six months from opening the editorial office to the date when manuscripts scheduled for publication in the first issue of the following year are due at the printer. The first issue of 2003 contained six papers processed through the Irvine offices and made it possible for me to move this issue to press in a timely fashion. I will strongly recommend a similar arrangement for the transition to the next editorial office. It is very much in the journal's interest to promote this sort of continuity. I deeply appreciate the hard work the Irvine editorial team—especially Dave Smith—put into their term with *Social Problems* and the gracious and helpful way in which they moved the operation to Marquette.

Operations at Marquette. The editorial offices at Marquette have functioned efficiently and effectively, thanks to the professional efforts of the editorial team: Jodi Rush, Editorial Coordinator; Caroline Goyette, Production Editor; Stephen Franzoi, Associate Editor; and Carol Archbold, Deputy Editor. Jodi has continued to improve the MS Access-based manuscript tracking system and data base inherited from Irvine, making it an even more effective editorial tool. We currently have over 3600 reviewer names in the data base and are beginning to code reviewers for their areas of expertise. Once this is accomplished, selection of reviewers for a manuscript should be expedited tremendously. Caroline has worked tirelessly to move articles through production expeditiously, and has brought a skilled editorial eye to the invisible, thankless task of copy editing and maintaining the high quality of writing for *Social Problems*.

The Marquette offices have operated under budget for the past year. All issues were delivered to the printer on schedule, and they have been printed and shipped on time. We have developed excellent working relationships with the University of California Press, Astrisk Typographics, and Capital City Press, with only occasional minor glitches.

Manuscript Traffic, Review Process, and Decisions. The number of manuscripts processed and the disposition of submissions is summarized below.

Social Problems

Manuscript Traffic

1 June 2002 to 31 May 2003

Total Manuscripts Submitted: **228**

Total Decisions Made: **205**

Editorial Decisions:

Decision	Original Submission	Revise/ Resubmit	Total	Percent	Mean Days to Decision
Accept		13	13	5.7	11.7
R/R for Expedited Rev.	2	12	14	6.1	61.4
Revise/Resubmit	44	5	49	21.5	69.8
Reject	87	14	101	44.3	64.2
Deflect	28	0	28	12.3	7.0
Under Review	8	15	23	10.1	--
Total	**169**	**59**	**228**		

Acceptance Rate: **5.7 Percent**

Reviews Per Manuscript (for those undergoing full review)**:**
    3 Reviewers: 23
    4 Reviewers: 141
    Mean reviews per ms.:   3.86

Review Solicitations:
    Reviews Solicited: 1473
    Reviews Commissioned: 655
    Reviewer Consent Rate: 43.0%
    Reviewers in Database: 3606 (1471 added since 2002)

Files Forwarded from Irvine Offices: **9**

    Accepted: 3
    Conditionally Accepted: 3
    Revise and Resubmit   3

The Marquette office processed 228 submissions in its first 12 months of operation. This is down from 274 submissions the prior year, but falls in the middle range of number of submissions over the past decade. This situation bears watching, but my concern is mitigated by two factors. First, due to the transition from the Irvine offices, quite a few submissions were processed in Irvine, making the total number of submissions for 2002-03 somewhat higher than the figure recorded at Marquette. Second, the number of manuscripts actually reviewed at Marquette (that is, those that were not "deflected" or withdrawn) was 200. While this is slightly lower than the number reviewed in 2002-02 in Irvine (n=225), it is well above the average number of manuscripts reviewed annually over the past decade.

The decrease in percentage of manuscripts deflected may be attributed to a number of factors. The *Social Problems* editorial team deflects manuscripts that do not 1) address social problems broadly construed, 2) make a significant theoretical contribution, or 3) present original arguments that are empirically grounded or clearly relevant for empirical research. A decade ago, the deflection rate was around 33 percent and has gradually declined. The editorial policy of reviewing only "qualified" manuscripts may have trained potential authors to submit only clearly relevant articles to the journal. A second explanation for the lower deflection rate may be entirely personal: I probably have a slightly wider range of tolerance for what constitutes a "social problems paper" than past editors. I'm also inclined to review papers which are not strictly empirical research reports if they are theoretically grounded and have clear implications for empirical research. Nevertheless, I fully endorse, and intend to continue, the general policy of deflecting papers that are not clearly "qualified" for full review. Deflections prevent needless reviews and help editors avoid having to reject papers that are "not appropriate for *Social Problems*," but which may have received otherwise favorable reviews.

The acceptance rate for the past year has been slightly less than six percent. This is only slightly lower than the rate over the past decade and is not a concern. We receive a high volume of good submissions and will continue to find sufficient numbers of high quality papers to publish.

The "turn-around" time for manuscripts submitted to the Marquette offices has been good. On average (*mean*), a manuscript undergoing full review receives a decision in less than 10 weeks from submission (*median* number of weeks is approximately nine). It would be virtually impossible to improve upon this rate if we continue to generate four reviews per submission. Over the past year, each full review averages (*mean*) 3.86 individual reviews.

One aspect of the review process I would like to improve is the time taken to solicit reviews. E-mail solicitation is a vast improvement over prior methods, but it also invites potential reviewers to say "no." Currently we have been achieving a 43 percent "consent" rate, which means that I ask 10 reviewers to review a paper before four agree to do the review. This is a labor-intensive process and it may take me over two weeks to put a paper in the hands of four reviewers. Coding our data base of reviewers by areas of expertise should help expedite this process, particularly since it will permit the editor to immediately pinpoint a large pool of experts in an area and also know their history of reviewing or declining to review for *Social Problems*.

Changes. With the approval of the Editorial and Publications Committee and the Executive Officer, I have instituted one significant change in the format of *Social Problems.* Beginning with the May 2003 issue (v. 50, no. 2). *Social Problems* is using the ASA referencing format. The vast majority of submissions arrive using ASA format, and virtually no one (including *Social Problems* editors) could implement the traditional, arcane *Social Problems* referencing style. The change has made life much simpler for the Production Editor and for authors of accepted papers.