



Social Problems

The official journal of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Ted Chiricos, Editor
Cyndy Caravelis-Hughes, Managing Editor
Amy Jo Woodruff, Production Editor

Rhonda Cupp, Editorial Assistant
Kristin Lavin, Editorial Assistant

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

From: Ted Chiricos, Editor, *Social Problems*

Re: 2008-09 Annual Report

Date: July 10, 2009

This report documents the activities of the editorial offices and staff at Florida State University from June 1, 2008-May 31, 2009.

Editorial Office

Thanks in part to Amy Wharton and her excellent staff, Amy Jo Woodruff and Caroline Chiang, the transition of editorial responsibilities to FSU was quite smooth. Most helpful in that transition was a visit I took in January of 2008 to the WSU offices in the company of Cyndy Caravelis Hughes, our incoming managing editor. Also helpful was a visit by Caroline Chiang to FSU in the Spring of 2008.

Several things further contributed to the ease of the transition. First has been the exceptional capabilities and effort of our managing editor, Cyndy Caravelis Hughes. As noted below, we installed a new submission and manuscript processing software (MsCentral) and a new on-line payment system on top of the challenge of doing something we have never done before – edit a journal. That there have been so few glitches is a testimony first to Cyndy and also to the very capable work of our two editorial assistants, Kristin Lavin and Rhonda Cupp. I cannot imagine working with a better team than we have had this year.

Also critical in transition was the willingness of Amy Jo Woodruff, then a new mom, to join our editorial team as production editor, while maintaining her residence in the far northwest. With the exception of soliciting copyright agreements and publication fees where applicable, Amy Jo handles everything that happens after the acceptance of a manuscript through publication, including all interaction with authors regarding page proofs and all interactions with the printer in India and UC Press.

Jim Holstein has been a consistent source of insight and judgment that I have turned to numerous times in this first year. Happily for him, those calls became less frequent with time, but his ready availability as a resource and sounding board is telling evidence of his deep commitment to SSSP and to *Social Problems*. Michele Smith Koontz has been an untiring source of institutional

knowledge and positive energy that has made this job so much easier and pleasant than it would be without her presence.

The editorial office has also benefited greatly from the expertise of our four associate editors, Jennifer Earl, Charis Kubrin, Matt Huffman and Sarah Soule, as well as from the very generous contributions from the members of our Board of Advisory Editors.

In June, 2008 I was invited to meet with the journals division staff of UC Press. Interactions with Rebekah Darksmith, Susanna Tadlock, Cheryl Owen-Swope and Mae Lum were informative, productive and delightful.

Budget

The editorial office operated within the approved budget this year. However, because the journal enjoyed a bounty of 18 previously accepted manuscripts at the time of transition, the BFA and the SSSP Board approved a request to fund up to 128 additional pages in Volume 56, so as to insure the continued timeliness for authors to have their accepted papers appear in print. These added pages appear in the February and August issues of the journal. The approved cost (\$9,487) of these expanded issues included \$4,995 to UC Press for printing and mailing and \$4,492 to Amy Jo Woodward for additional production work.

Manuscript Central

With the start of the new editorial term, *Social Problems* joined a substantial number of journals using Manuscript Central, developed by ScholarOne as its manuscript submission and management software. All submissions are handled electronically by this system as is much of the correspondence between authors, reviewers and the journal. Our editorial team has been most impressed with the efficiency of this system and I am pleased to note that the number of persons who could not effectively work with the software totals in the single digits. In those instances our staff has developed easy workarounds to help authors or reviewers with their needs

As approved by the BFA and the Board, the installation of MsCentral for *Social Problems* involved a one time start up cost of \$1,850 which included the establishment of a PayPal account for electronic payment of submission fees. The use of MsCentral involves a \$25 submission fee which can be waived. Because the fee charged to SSSP for processing a new manuscript is \$19.50 (no charges for revised resubmissions) the society nets \$5.50 for each new submission. The 308 new submissions this year should have produced a residual sum of approximately \$1,690, which comes close to paying for the start up costs. Moving forward, those residual funds will be available to defray submission costs for those requesting such assistance (one such request to date) or for whatever other purposes SSSP deems fit.

Manuscript Submissions and Processing

As the attached table indicates, there were 308 new submissions this past year. This compares to 276 for the previous year and an average of 241 for the previous six years. Revised submissions totaled 50 compared with 66 in the previous year. The acceptance rate of 5% is artificially low

because the abundance of previously accepted manuscripts that we received inclined us to move slowly in this regard to avoid creating too much of a logjam of accepted papers waiting to get published. Assuming the level of submissions remains close to what it has been, and that somewhere between 28-32 papers are published each year, it is expected that the acceptance rate will remain close to 8-9% which has been its recent norm.

A little over 28% of submissions were deflected. While this is higher than in recent years, it comports with the levels that characterized earlier editors such as Jim Orcutt, with whom I discussed this issue before assuming my responsibilities. Deflects obviously have advantages and disadvantages. From the author's point of view the advantage is having a quick resolution which allows submission elsewhere without a long wait. The disadvantage is the lack of detailed feedback from reviewers. From the journal's point of view, the advantage of a deflect decision is that good reviewers are not "used up" on papers for which the editor sees little chance of publication. The reasons for deflect decisions include: (1) little or no development of a theoretical context for the proposed analysis; (2) the paper is not sociological; (3) the paper does not deal with a social problem; (4) the paper in its current form lacks sufficient development.

In early discussions with our associate editors, the decision was made to try to effect an editorial outcome on the basis of three or more reviews. The norm of three is relatively common in the social sciences, and our average of 3.2 completed reviews per decision is consistent with that. In most categories, the time to decision is slightly longer than in the recent past, but not excessive in the context of most sociology journals. We certainly hope to shorten those turnaround times in the coming year.

It has been an honor to serve in this capacity and a humbling pleasure to witness and benefit from the extraordinary insights of the many wonderful reviewers, advisory editors and associate editors.

Manuscript Traffic and Editorial Decisions

June 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009

Decision	Original Submission	Revised Submission	Total	Percent of Submissions	Mean Days to Decision
Accept	0	18	18	5.0	48.2
Revise & Resubmit	47	13	60	16.8	113.0
Reject	109	14	123	34.3	102.3
Deflect	101	0	101	28.2	15.7
Total Decisions	257	45	302	84.3	72.2
Currently Under Review	51	5	56	15.6	
Total Submissions	308	50	358	100.0	

Acceptance Rate: 5.0%

Mean Days to Decision (full review): 100.6

Reviews Per Manuscript (full review): 3.2

Editorial Activity

Reviewers Solicited: 1471
Reviews: 652
Reviewer Consent Rate: 44.3%