FROM THE EDITOR

With two and one-half years completed in our editorship of the *Review*, I thought it would be interesting to look back over the work we have done and see what observations could be made. I also want to announce the successful conclusion of our search for the next editor, preview some coming issues of the *Review*, explain the changes in issue designation, and report on an issue of research ethics that recently came to our attention.

Approximately 450 manuscripts have been considered for publication, excluding those considered for, and published in, our special issues on plea bargaining (13:2) and sociolegal research (14:3). During the first year, through April 30, 1979, 203 manuscripts were submitted (including 21 acquired from Rick Abel in the editorial transition). In the second year ending April 30, 1980, only 148 manuscripts were received. Since many of these were revised manuscripts submitted for reconsideration, it appeared that we might be witnessing the beginning of a decline in manuscript submissions. I reported this observation to the Board of Trustees at the June meeting, noting that some other scholarly journals were experiencing a similar decline. Since then, however, the downward "trend" seems to have abated. In the last seven months we have received nearly 120 manuscripts; at that pace we can expect as many as 175 manuscripts in the current "editorial" year. It all goes to prove that you can't establish a trend line from a single observation.

Our acceptance rate continues at about 10 percent of the manuscripts submitted. Less than half of these are accepted for publication without the need for further revision. The remainder are returned to the authors, along with the reviewers' comments, with suggestions for revision. Most of the articles we publish have gone through one or (not infrequently) more rewrite stages. About 25 percent of submitted manuscripts are rejected on the basis of evaluations from outside readers; another 12-15 percent are rejected outright by me without invoking the assistance of readers. These manuscripts are so clearly unsuitable—because of subject matter or obvious poor quality—that I am reluctant to waste the time of our readers. The rest are returned to authors with an invitation to revise and resubmit, but with no commitment to publish.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023921600016637 Published online by Cambridge University Press

At its annual meeting last June, the Board of Trustees invited Professor Richard O. Lempert of the University of Michigan Law School to become the next editor of the *Review*. Lempert has accepted that invitation, and will assume responsibility beginning with Volume 17, in the summer of 1982. My term as editor was to have expired in 1981, with the conclusion of Volume 15. However, since Lempert could not take over until 1982, I have agreed to remain as editor for an additional year, through Volume 16.

I am pleased to have a successor and particularly delighted that it will be Rick Lempert. Rick was the unanimous choice of the editorial selection committee, and of the Board of Trustees. There is none among us held in higher professional regard. He brings to the job a wide range of skills and breadth of interests. And his appointment continues the very useful tradition of rotating the editorship among the various participating disciplines in the law and society enterprise. Indeed, as both a sociologist and a law professor, he represents two of those disciplines.

Despite the temporary decline in the rate of manuscript submissions last year, the *Review* suddenly finds itself with a small backlog—not one large enough to cause long waits for publication of accepted manuscripts, but sufficient to provide the editorial staff with just a bit of breathing space and an opportunity to make up a few additional months in our efforts to get the *Review* "back" on schedule. Volumes 15:2 and 15:3 are "filled," and we are accepting manuscripts for publication in 15:4 and beyond.

Volume 15:3 will be a massive "special issue" devoted to civil justice research. The issue was originally conceived as a preliminary report, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, of the Civil Litigation Research Project at the University of Wisconsin. A projected (and still substantially accurate) list of contributors appeared in Volume 14:2. However, the editors decided to expand the issue to include contributions from other scholars. Four such contributions have been accepted: Kristin Bumiller, "Choice of Forum in Diversity Cases: Analysis of a Survey and Implications for Reform"; Lynn Mather and Barbara Yngvesson, "Language, Audience and the Transformation of Disputes"; Susan Silbey, "Some Considerations on Processing Consumer Complaints"; and Wayne McIntosh, "150 Years of Litigation and Dispute Settlement: A Court Tale."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023921600016637 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Professor Shari Seidman Diamond will edit another special issue devoted to research in the general field of psychology and law. It will appear as Volume 17:1. Questions about that issue, and prospective contributions to it, should be sent directly to Professor Diamond, at the following address:

Professor Shari Seidman Diamond
Department of Psychology
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle
Box 4348
Chicago, IL 60680

Manuscripts will be accepted until January 12, 1982. The issue is slated to appear in the summer of 1982.

Beginning with Volume 7, each quarterly issue of the *Review* has carried a "seasonal" designation—e.g., "Fall, 1979; Winter, 1980; Spring, 1980; and Summer, 1980." We have not been able to maintain this schedule of publication in recent years, and this has caused difficulties with the Post Office in Denver, where our second-class mailing permit is issued. In theory, as I understand the situation, all four issues of a volume should be published within the fiscal year. Our dating system itself thus violates that rule, and our tardiness exacerbates the matter. To avoid losing the mailing permit (a substantial subsidy), we will no longer include a seasonal designation. Each volume of the *Review* will contain four issues marked only by issue number and the fiscal year designation. Thus, the issues of the current volume will be designated: "Volume 15, No. 1 (2, 3, 4), 1980-81." The masthead on the inside cover will indicate that these issues will be published quarterly in the "Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring." Eliminating the seasonal designation will not automatically bring the *Review* back "on schedule." Indeed, it will temporarily put us a bit farther behind. But my goal is to publish my last issue, Volume 16:4 in the early summer of 1982.

At the beginning of the year I was confronted unexpectedly with an issue of research ethics. It was not the "usual" question of how to deal with duplicate submissions or reader conflicts of interest, but rather with the much thornier issue of an editor's role in monitoring (or sanctioning) apparent violations of research ethics. Suppose, for example, that a manuscript we are considering for publication is based on research which may have violated the premises of informed consent. Perhaps it is a case of outright duplicity, as when the researcher infiltrates the group or organization to be studied and is accepted by members of that group as one of their own (see "The Ethics of Covert Methods," 31 *British Journal of*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023921600016637 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Sociology 46 [1980]). Perhaps it is a violation of a more subtle nature, such as gaining the consent of research subjects without fully apprising them of the uses to which their responses would be put (and assuming that full disclosure probably would have resulted in a significant degree of noncooperation by the subjects). The research has been completed, and it appears, in fact, that no significant harm has come, or will come, to the slightly misinformed subjects. The manuscript reporting that research is well done and otherwise likely to be accepted for publication.

What should an editor do in such a situation? Is there an implicit exclusionary rule that editors are obliged to follow? What are the important factors to consider? For example, assuming the research and manuscript are well done, what of their empirical or theoretical importance? Suppose that this kind of research cannot be carried out in a manner which follows the full disclosure guidelines to the letter? Is the magnitude of the violation a significant factor? Should such concerns be considered at all in determining whether or not to publish the manuscript? Do journal editors have a responsibility to routinely scrutinize every publishable manuscript for ethical transgressions, or (if they have any responsibility at all) should they deal only with ethical problems which are obvious or called to their attention?

There are no easy answers to these questions. No doubt I would probably reject a manuscript resulting from a truly flagrant violation of research ethics. But is it my function to systematically scrutinize for ethical violations the manuscripts which pass through our initial filtering stage? Would it be appropriate to require authors to submit information on the degree to which their research conforms to ethical standards? What are these standards? Should the Association develop a set of standards to be applied to research published in its journal?

JBG

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023921600016637 Published online by Cambridge University Press