A report calling for the establishment of procedures for reporting, reviewing, and resolving professional problems with and complaints against members of the LSA:

1 Although this draft identifies many issues of concern, it is not definitive; as such, the title seeks to convey that this report is prefatory. Additional work has yet to be completed, a great deal of which is called for herein. The authors wish to acknowledge the extensive and supportive contributions that have been provided by Alyson Reed, David Robinson, and several members of the Linguistic Society of America who consulted with the WG throughout the development of this report; their contributions have been timely and significant.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.................................................................................................4
Preamble: Reflections and aspirations......................................................................5
Preface....................................................................................................................5
Objectives of this report..........................................................................................5
Anticipated activities for the creation and completion of a PRP..............................5
  Preliminary fact finding.......................................................................................6
  Additional fact finding........................................................................................6
  Evidentiary evaluation........................................................................................6
  Problem Resolution Protocol Formulation.........................................................6
  Implementation and utilization.........................................................................6
Qualifications of the contributors...........................................................................7
Significant missing qualifications..........................................................................8
Preliminary mission formulation.............................................................................9
Essential legal considerations for jurisdictional authorization............................9
An illustrative array of some problematic issues.................................................9
  Social media controversies..............................................................................9
  Sexual harassment and assault......................................................................10
  Bullying behavior............................................................................................10
  Gender identity or sexuality-related discrimination.....................................10
  Racist commentary, harassment, and other threats....................................10
  Submission of falsified or fabricated evidence.............................................11
Analytical procedures..........................................................................................11
Phase 1: Immediate interim actions....................................................................11
  Identification of an interim LSA Ombuds Committee.....................................11
Solicitation of member preferences for a PRP: Suggestions, solutions, & proposals.12
A heuristic discourse evaluation matrix for LSA member social media postings.....12
Figure 1: A heuristic matrix categorizing diverse social media postings by LSA members.13
A preliminary flow chart for LSA problem categorization..................................13
Figure 2: A flow chart for LSA problem registration, categorization, and specification.14
Potential conflict resolution and the promotion of inclusive and harmonious collegiality .14
Appreciation for LSA membership assistance and advice..................................14
Phase 2: Anticipated components of prospective adjudication procedures..........14
  Problem identification process.......................................................................15
  Determination of the scope of LSA authority.................................................15
  Assessment of the corresponding evidence.................................................15
  Opportunities for accused parties to justify and/or defend their actions.....15
  Adjudication options and procedures............................................................15
  Appeal processes............................................................................................16
  Final authoritative rulings..............................................................................16
Potential pitfalls....................................................................................................16
The grail we seek: A Problem Resolution Protocol for the LSA........................16
The perilous journey ahead ...............................................................................16
An appraisal of advantages, limitations, and vulnerabilities..............................16
Summary.............................................................................................................17
Conclusion...........................................................................................................17
Appendix I: Additional links to public evidence reviewed by the WG.............18
Appendix II: Linguistic methods that have been variously utilized to evaluate some of the evidence appearing in Appendix I……………………………………………………………………………………………………..26
Executive Summary

This report is the product of a working group (WG) composed of a subgroup of the 2021 configuration of the Executive Committee (EC). 2020 was a watershed year for the Society due to a variety of problems that came to a head with the submission of an open letter to the LSA in July of that year. Ensuing responses to that letter, and tumultuous discord among LSA members in the aftermath of contentious correspondence relating to those events, gave rise to two task forces which were convened to address interconnected concerns: one group (TF1) focused on Media Resources while the other (TF2) concentrated on Procedures for Evaluating Professional Conduct.

An open forum with LSA members took place on January 14, 2021, and many members expressed concerns following the lack of resolution regarding complaints and requests that were contained in the open letter. In addition, there were further expressions of frustration about perceived inaction by the LSA and the EC. Social media controversies were top of mind in the immediate aftermath of the open forum, so much so that during the ensuing EC meeting, members unanimously agreed that a plan of action was necessary. While deliberations began with consideration of the social media controversies that came to light in July of 2020, ensuing conversation expanded beyond events of the past year to a variety of other problematic incidents affecting the LSA, including a prior open letter concerning sexual harassment, as well as the EC’s response to that letter, circa 2017.

It soon became clear that any effort to address professional problems within the LSA would exceed social media controversies given a profusion of other difficulties, including evidence of the submission of falsified evidence for some LSA authorized publications. While the entire EC is committed to pursuing the creation of new problem resolution procedures, this report presents a roadmap for that journey, along with a preliminary blueprint of what should be built and how it should be implemented.

In addition to an overview of the anticipated activities that will be required to complete various tasks, we describe other LSA problems and introduce immediate actions to initiate interim procedures that will provide LSA members with immediate access to an Ombuds Committee composed of fellow members. An assessment of some of the advantages, limitations, and vulnerabilities of WG activities appears, prior to a summary and conclusion. Our ultimate goal, which would benefit greatly from additional input by LSA members, is the creation and implementation of codified procedures to resolve a plethora of professional problems within the LSA, now and in the future.

Among our greatest concerns about prospects for eventual success include an understandable desire for rapid resolution, which may be antithetical to a full and thorough evaluation of existing and forthcoming evidence, as well as various other considerations (including resource constraints) that will prove vital to the formulation of problem resolution procedures and ensuing remediation that have heretofore never existed within the LSA.
Preamble: Reflections and aspirations

This preamble begins on a reflective note, looking back to 1924 when the Linguistic Society of America was created. The primordial Society was much less diverse than it is today; the prevailing cultural climate among academicians nearly a century ago tended to be exclusionary toward women and people of color, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community. The legacy of sexism and racism in academic settings inevitably affected the LSA and the predominantly white male faculty that perpetuated unequal access to linguistic training and related professions.

While some of these discriminatory imbalances have been reduced, they have certainly not yet been fully or adequately eradicated, and therein lies a combination of additional challenges and opportunities to help the LSA become more inclusive, more welcoming, and more supportive of all members, especially newer members who may feel vulnerable to bullying, harassment, and other exclusionary behavior. Emerging scholars within the Society face significant new challenges that are undergoing rapid change, such as the ubiquitous prevalence of social media. Several of these members have requested assistance and advice with a growing sense of urgency that include various calls to action. We recognize that the tasks ahead are formidable; nevertheless, we accept these challenges with humility and recognition of an accompanying need for collective engagement and goodwill among our fellow LSA members from diverse backgrounds. If we, as a Society, ever hope to overcome prior mistakes, we must do so together by creating new structural entities that are more embracing and responsive to all LSA members.

Preface

The Linguistic Society of America has witnessed a series of tumultuous and problematic events. Various actions and activities by members of the LSA have collectively confirmed the need for regulations that do not yet exist and which need to be formulated. In order to create fair and equitable procedures that allow members to identify different types of problems associated with the LSA, the Executive Committee (EC) met in early 2021 to discuss ways in which the LSA should proceed. A working group consisting of four members of the EC was created and assigned the challenge of devising procedures that would ideally culminate with the creation of effective LSA problem resolution procedures.

Objectives of this report

The primary objective of this report is to share information with LSA members describing plans that we believe will lead to the creation of a Problem Resolution Protocol (PRP) for the LSA. Additional information is provided describing some of the evidence that the WG has considered for the purpose of producing this report, along with announcements of the immediate implementation of interim mechanisms that have been established to allow LSA members to seek assistance without delay and prior to the completion of a fully vetted PRP. The evidence that has come to light is not complete, and we describe ways in which we hope to enlist additional assistance from LSA members; that is, to help formulate the PRP by identifying real and potential problems that have escaped the attention or recognition of the WG thus far. We also want to keep open lines of communication between the EC and LSA members throughout this process, particularly if members can offer ideas, suggestions, and advice regarding what they would like the EC and LSA to produce in order to ultimately provide fair, equitable, and effective resolution processes.

Anticipated activities for the creation and completion of a PRP

This section describes some of the essential steps, and the components they are likely to require, that are necessary for the creation of adaptable arbitration procedures that various LSA members have asked us to create for the Society. Yes, the challenges ahead are formidable, and the ensuing steps represent a series of sequential milestones that must be completed in order to accomplish the mission at hand.
Preliminary fact finding
Evidence of various problems within the LSA predated the creation of the WG, and the first order of business has been to examine much of that evidence. Appendix I contains links to a substantial body of the public evidence that has come to our attention, which we have begun to analyze, often using linguistic methods to support our preliminary assessments. This fact finding included consideration of another open letter, which described challenges to “develop some procedures to enforce the values it [the LSA] espoused in its recent Statement on Racial Justice.” Additional evidence made clear that racial justice alone is not the sole factor in any comprehensive formulation of adjudication procedures. Moreover, since no regulations currently exist, LSA members previously lacked any access to a means whereby complaints can be officially registered within the society.

Faced with the realization that any formulation of codified mechanisms to merely register complaints, to say nothing of their eventual resolution, would inevitably require a considerable amount of time and effort, we have requested that the LSA/EC take some immediate steps to establish two interim processes to provide temporary relief until such time as a potential PRP can be more fully formulated. All interim mechanisms are available to LSA members now, and they can be accessed through the LSA member portal, including: 1) access to an Ombuds Committee, 2) a call for additional ideas, suggestions, and proposals by LSA members in support of developing a PRP.

Additional fact finding
In addition to the call in (2) above, the WG will consider any additional evidence that comes to light that might inform our deliberations, with the goal of enhancing the final creation of a complete and effective PRP. Thus, in addition to suggestions regarding the PRP, LSA members are encouraged to share any and all information that might enhance the prospects for the eventual success of this enterprise.

Evidentiary evaluation
The integration, classification, and assessment of new evidence will be an ongoing venture. Ideally, we hope to begin PRP formulation three months after LSA members have an opportunity to read this report. We recognize in advance that additional information may be presented to the WG after three months; we are imposing a ninety-day window for the submission of solicited information and ideas from LSA members to ensure that PRP creation can proceed apace.

Problem Resolution Protocol formulation
While creation of an effective PRP is our present goal, the LSA is not ideally suited to complete this process without additional advice and expertise not found within the Society. Linguistic expertise has proven to be most useful in some instances, but few LSA members have sufficient experience to create procedures that will provide for the arbitration, mediation, remediation, resolution, and potential appeals of final judgments. However, it is highly likely that any effective PRP will require just such expertise. Rather than shirking this challenge, the WG recognizes that transparency and candor are appropriate at this early stage of development.

Implementation and utilization
The outcome that we seek will take place once a PRP is established and its mechanisms have been utilized in a manner that demonstrates the fair and equitable resolution of diverse problems that may arise within the LSA. Indeed, the entire undertaking strives toward this goal.
Qualifications of the contributors

John Baugh is the Margaret Bush Wilson Professor in Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. He holds professorships and departmental or programmatic affiliation with Psychological and Brain Sciences, Anthropology, Education, English, Linguistics, African and African American Studies, American Cultural Studies, Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology, and Urban Studies. He is Professor Emeritus of Education and, by courtesy, Linguistics at Stanford University. Professor Baugh obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. in Linguistics in 1976 and 1979, respectively, from the University of Pennsylvania. He has taught professorially at Swarthmore College, The University of Texas at Austin, Stanford University, and Washington University in St. Louis. He is a former President of the American Dialect Society, and is presently President-Elect of the Linguistic Society of America, where he is also a fellow. He is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Professor Baugh has served as an expert legal witness in several civil and criminal cases, and nearly every case has required linguistic evaluation. His expertise has previously utilized a wide range of linguistic procedures, including – but not limited to – phonetic analyses (including spectrographic analyses and corresponding experimental comparisons), phonological evaluations, morphological analyses and comparisons, as well as syntax, semantics, survey data, speech act theory, and discourse analysis and conversation analysis (among others).

Professor Baugh served for nearly twenty years as a member of the usage committee for the American Heritage English Dictionary, and he has served as a member of the national advisory committee for two PBS documentary series, titled “The Story of English" and “Do you speak American.” He is an associate producer of a recent PBS documentary titled, “Talking Black in America.” In addition to his membership as a Board member of the Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences of the National Academies of Science, Medicine, and Engineering, he is also a long-standing member of the Board of Directors for the Oracle Education Foundation.

Chris Kennedy is William H. Colvin Professor of Linguistics at the University of Chicago, where he served as Chair of the Department of Linguistics for eight years; he has also served on the University Academic Fraud Committee, the Division of Humanities Diversity Committee, the Division of Humanities Policy Committee, which advises the Dean on tenure and promotion decisions, and the Division of Humanities Graduate Affairs Committee. He is currently a member of the Committee of the Council of the University Senate, an elected body of seven faculty members who serve as the interface between the faculty government and the University administration on all matters of academic and educational policy. He received his PhD from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1997, and was a member of the faculty in the Department of Linguistics at Northwestern University for eight years, before moving to the University of Chicago in 2005. His research areas are semantic and pragmatic theory and philosophy of language, with particular focus on issues pertaining to meaning and communication involving vague, subjective or otherwise indeterminate language. He recently completed a four-year term as Associate Editor of Language, is currently an Associate Editor of Journal of Semantics, and is one of the General Editors (with Chris Barker) of the Oxford University Press series Studies in Semantics and Pragmatics and Surveys in Semantics and Pragmatics.

Sonja Lanehart is Professor of Linguistics in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) and Teaching, Learning, and Sociocultural Studies in the College of Education as well as Affiliate Professor in Africana Studies in the College of Humanities and a Faculty Fellow in the Graduate College at the University of Arizona since 2019. She was previously the Brackenridge Endowed Chair in Literature and the Humanities at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) from 2006, where she served in many leadership roles, including Chair of the University Faculty Review and Advisory Committee, Chair of the
College of Liberal and Fine Arts Faculty Review and Advisory Committee, Co-Chair of the Provost’s Inclusiveness Task Force, and member of the Provost’s Leadership UTSA Advisory Board as well as the Core Values Initiative. In her short time at the University of Arizona, she has served on the Linguistics Department IRB Committee, the SBS Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Graduate College Leadership Team, Provost’s Mentoring Institute. She is currently a Trustee for the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English

Dr. Lanehart earned her Ph.D. in English Language and Linguistics and her M.A. in Medieval Studies at the University of Michigan. She earned her B.A. in English Language and Linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Lanehart’s scholarship focuses on language and identity in African American communities; sociolinguistics and language variation; and African American education from Black Feminisms, and Critical Race Theory, and Intersectionality perspectives. She is particularly interested in pushing the boundaries of language and linguistics scholarship to be more representative of JEDI -- justice, equity, diversity, inclusion – in all aspects, and anti-racism in particular. She is a staunch advocate for mentoring and sponsoring emerging scholars of color through the ranks of academia. This is reflected in her moderating several listservs and distribution lists of Black scholars and emerging student scholars of color, her editorship of the groundbreaking *Oxford Handbook of African American Language* (2015), many years of service and leadership on the LSA Committee on Ethnic Diversity in Linguistics, and associate producer of the *Talking Black in America* documentary series.

**Arthur K. Spears** is Presidential Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Linguistics at The City University of New York (the Graduate Center and City College). He served as chair of the Anthropology Department for many years and as Director of the Black Studies Program (City College). He was the president (2007-2009) of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics.

His Ph.D. in Linguistics was earned at the University of California, San Diego (1977). From Northwestern University, he received an M.A. in Linguistics; and, from The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, he received an M.A. with Distinction in International Relations (Latin America area specialization and course concentration on Africa). He earned a B.A. with a triple major in French (Honors), Spanish, and Political Science from the University of Kansas.

Dr. Spears’ research spans linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, pidgins/creoles and language contact, grammatical analysis, race and ethnicity, education, and ideology. His language specialties are African American English and Haitian Creole. He works in four languages, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and is a U.S. Department of State certified interpreter in those languages. He has served several journals in an editorial capacity: *Language, American Speech, Transforming Anthropology*, and the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*. In the public arena, he has served as a legal expert witness in cases related to race and skin-color discrimination, homicide, and language and dialect matters.

He is an associate producer of two documentary films: (1) “Signing Black in America: The Story of Black American Sign Language” (Walt Wolfram, Executive Producer; Neal Hutcheson and Danica Cullinan, Producers and Directors; Raleigh, NC: Language and Life Project, 2019) and (2) “Talking Black in America: The Story of African American Language” (Walt Wolfram, Executive Producer; Neal Hutcheson and Danica Cullinan, Producers and Directors; Raleigh, NC: Language and Life Project, 2016, 2018 (2nd edition)). Prof. Spears has disseminated information on linguistics on radio and television, including National Public Radio and the BBC’s “The Story of English”.

**Significant missing qualifications**

Problems of the kind we strive to address are typically handled by professionals with substantial human resources experience, which might also include legal training regarding the regulation of misconduct
and malfeasance within a professional organization or institution. Because the LSA has only two paid employees, including the Director, the legal ramifications of a PRP may intersect with the rules and regulations of other institutions; namely, those with which LSA members have contractual affiliations.

Because of the complexity of various problems that have come to light, we recognize in advance that additional expertise and resources may be required in order to create an effective PRP. However, as information is still being gathered, we cannot yet specify what missing elements need to be included to accomplish this mission.

**Preliminary mission formulation**

The mission is to advance the development of fair and equitable procedures for the official recognition, remediation and resolution of professional problems within the LSA. In order to do so, fact finding procedures have been initiated and will be expanded henceforth in support of the establishment of clear policies and procedures to resolve grievances regarding various problems that are within the purview of the LSA. We envision that this could be accomplished by the creation of a carefully crafted adaptable PRP.

**Essential legal considerations for jurisdictional authorization**

To what extent might allegations of LSA member misconduct fall within the legal purview of the LSA? Some instances of confirmed misconduct will definitely be included under LSA jurisdiction, while other forms of alleged misconduct by members may be legally beyond the bounds of LSA regulation. As with all legal proceedings, the answers to these questions must necessarily be determined on a case-by-case basis, and might depend upon mitigating circumstances or evidence, some of which may be unavailable for LSA scrutiny or review. In the event that a PRP is eventually produced, it will need to take these issues into account. Moreover, specifying the parameters surrounding matters that are within LSA jurisdiction are likely to require thorough evaluation by legal counsel.

**An illustrative array of some problematic issues**

This enterprise has included extensive evidence collection, and the information shared herein is illustrative of several of the issues and incidents that the WG has considered to date. Moreover, some of the problems described here lack incidental specification by design, so as to protect the identity of aggrieved parties while still highlighting various problems in terms of diverse classifications 2. Whenever possible, problem descriptions contain sufficient detail to clarify our call for the potential creation of a PRP or alternative future remediation procedures.

**Social media controversies**

As the nation and the world experienced an unprecedented succession of critical events throughout 2020, from the deadly Covid pandemic to a racial reckoning sparked by the extrajudicial killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd to an election held in the midst of a culture war, many in America and elsewhere focused their energy toward the achievement of social justice. In the midst of these national crises, hundreds of LSA members signed the open letter ([TOL](#)) in early July 2020 in response to a series of controversial social media postings on Twitter. Contentious differences of opinion among linguists inevitably ensued,

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2 Important informational links are embedded throughout this document. Additional evidence that has informed this report appears in Appendix I. This additional evidence contains specific incident related details that are not reiterated herein. Readers who are unfamiliar with any of the events mentioned may wish to explore the additional evidence for a more complete understanding of facts, evidence, and information that has been considered.
accentuating the growing influence of social media. Expressions of dissatisfaction with what was characterized as the LSA’s delayed and insufficient response to a variety of concerns were widely circulated on Twitter and other platforms.

This chain of events reached a crescendo during the summer of 2020, leading to the formulation of present preliminary report. While TOL is not the first controversy affecting linguists and the field of linguistics, it reverberated strongly and is therefore the focus of this report, despite the fact that other serious issues were identified a few years before these more recent social media controversies came to light.

**Sexual harassment and assault**

Independently of the TOL, the WG is aware of complaints about sexual harassment and assault. One such incident was presented to the LSA/EC in 2017 in a previous open letter that included over one thousand signatories. Some of the other instances of assault and sexual harassment that involve LSA members have harmed people participating in LSA activities as well as involving circumstances not associated with the LSA. While we are not at liberty to disclose all relevant details, they have been directed at women, men, and nonbinary LSA members, in addition to LGBTQIA+ populations. The problems associated with sexual harassment and assault are multifarious and complicated due to circumstances that vary from case to case. Despite the challenges posed by the verbal and physical nature of these affronts, their existence further affirms the need for a PRP.

**Bullying behavior**

LSA members may be unaware of the full range of information that has been shared with the EC. In many cases this is the result of requests for confidentiality and/or anonymity. Be that as it may, the WG was made aware of disturbing instances of alleged bullying that have negatively impacted some newer members. They, in turn, were unable to know how best to seek relief, and asked the EC for help and advice, which has led to responses on an individual basis. The LSA/EC responded to concerns regarding “bullying and issues of differential power in the discipline” within an updated statement about Intellectual Freedom. As mentioned, LSA members may be unaware of some of the additional evidence beyond the TOL that was revealed as some individual members came forward with personal accounts of bullying that represent other problems that demand solutions that do not yet exist.

**Gender identity or sexuality-related discrimination**

In striving to be supportive and inclusive of everyone, the LSA recognizes the particular issues that are faced by LGBTQIA+ members who face historic marginalization. For example, to what extent might offensive remarks of a homophobic nature constitute evidence of professional misconduct that might otherwise be protected as an example of “free speech?” While the WG is not composed of attorneys, we consider any verbal affronts about a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity as evidence of misconduct that should be included within any fully operational PRP. The COZIL committee has begun to address these concerns more directly through a document titled “LSA Guidelines for Avoiding Misgendering in Professional Communications” which details ways that LSA members can avoid misgendering in scholarly articles, teaching materials, email, and personal and professional interactions.

**Racist commentary, harassment, and other threats**

In addition to racial controversies that were described in TOL, there is – regrettably – an abundance of additional evidence that LSA scholars of color have often experienced racist remarks and other racially discriminatory behavior that have gone unreported or undetected. These concerns are described more fully in the LSA Statement on Race. Their relevance here provides further evidence of additional problems that future adjudication procedures may need to address.
Submission of falsified or fabricated evidence

One of the problems submitted to the WG dealt with a confirmed case of falsified evidence in a paper that had been submitted to Language for editorial consideration. The evidence pertaining to the allegations, which represented a fundamental breach of ethical scientific conduct, was incontrovertible and irrefutable. While intellectual honesty is part of a larger ethical landscape, described more fully in the revised LSA Ethics Statement, the anecdotal evidence of an attempt to submit falsified data constitutes another problem brought to the attention of the WG.

Analytical procedures

Another way of viewing the anticipated outcome of this enterprise is through the lens of policy development. The vast majority of policy formulations do not have the benefit of corresponding linguistic analyses; the creation of this report is an exception to that trend. In this instance, linguistic analyses of various types have been utilized to evaluate a substantial body of evidence that has been reviewed by the WG, a great deal of which can be found in Appendix I. The expertise that we collectively possess is well suited to this early stage of policy formulation. Most of the evidence that has come to our attention consists of articles, interviews, podcasts, correspondence, and confidential conversations with LSA members seeking to maintain anonymity.

Appendix II provides an overview of linguistic methods that have been variously employed to assess much of the evidence contained in Appendix I. In addition, other anonymous and confidential information has been shared with the WG that we are not at liberty to disclose. Our ability to draw upon various linguistic methods, ranging from cursory to detailed evaluations of the available evidence, has been most advantageous. While we recognize that other limitations have constrained our assessments thus far, the linguistic methods that have been available to us are ideally suited to the prefatory goals espoused here.

Phase 1: Immediate interim actions

The absence of established regulations to resolve various problems associated with the LSA could be partially alleviated by temporary procedures. Two actions have been implemented on an interim basis: the creation of an interim Ombuds Committee, and a call for assistance from LSA members. In addition to offering immediate provisional mechanisms to help remediate problems that come to light prior to the envisioned creation of a PRP, any issues that are introduced will also help inform the creation of those procedures.

Identification of an interim LSA Ombuds Committee

The WG strongly recommends the immediate implementation of an interim Ombuds Committee to allow LSA members to report and register various concerns and complaints, and to do so confidentially. The envisioned role is designed to provide mechanisms to explore options for actions, while engaging in a preliminary gathering of facts. The anonymity of members who engage the Ombuds Committee will be preserved, unless otherwise requested by the member themselves or required by law. The Ombuds Committee will coordinate and collaborate to ensure that all inquiries strive toward resolution, be that in the form of mediation, arbitration, or other resolution procedures that may be case-specific. The ultimate

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3 The rationale for employing a committee rather than a single person is due to a desire for diverse representation. Every effort is being made to enlist women, men, People of Color, and LGBTQIA+ representation. Depending upon the matter being considered, one team member might be better suited to assess a particular problem, hence the desire for broad membership representation on the Ombuds Committee. Also, because this is a temporary solution, lessons learned will inform the establishment of more permanent configurations in the future.
goal in every instance shall be to achieve satisfactory remediation of all credible incidents of reported problems associated with the LSA.

Solicitation of member preferences for a PRP: Suggestions, solutions, & proposals
What would members like to see included within an effective PRP? We value any additional ideas or suggestions that members will be able to share through the LSA member portal. More precisely, we have created a new link that can be opened through the LSA member portal, and a form is provided there that allows for comments, suggestions, and contributions, which will be added to other information to be evaluated in its entirety prior to the creation of the envisioned PRP.

A heuristic discourse evaluation matrix for LSA member social media postings
LSA members are likely to know that some of the problems that have come to light pertain to controversial social media postings. LSA member activity on social media varies greatly, and for the purpose of categorizing member social media usage, a matrix has been created that illustrates different types of social media postings. Some postings describe linguistic matters, while others do not. For the sake of identifying LSA member postings that may be deemed inappropriate or harmful, we further distinguish between responsible social media usage and irresponsible usage, thereby providing a mechanism that can be used to classify member social media postings for future consideration.
A preliminary flow chart for addressing LSA problems

Due to the fact that the envisioned PRP must be adaptable and capable of addressing the widest possible range of prospective LSA member problems, a preliminary model has been created that designates the relative magnitude of diverse grievances. Some issues might be classified as minor infractions, while others – such as assault or battery – would be characterized as a major infraction. In law, minor infractions are often defined as “misdemeanors,” whereas major infractions, such as premeditated physical assault, represent “felonies.” For the purpose of anticipated LSA adjudication procedures, members are likely to need alternative ways of registering complaints. One possible illustration of alternative procedures is provided in the following flow chart in Figure 2.

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4 It is important to recognize the heuristic nature of this model. Neither the WG or EC seek to designate or define responsible social media postings in contrast to irresponsible social media postings. Differences of opinion are inevitable; however, various members are likely to perceive some social media posts as inappropriate, while other LSA members might find the identical social media posting quite acceptable. We encourage independent assessment of social media usage, and we do so without prejudging LSA members who utilize social media.
Potential conflict resolution and the promotion of inclusive and harmonious collegiality

A great deal of the evidence that has come to light throughout the fact-finding stage of this enterprise indicates the potential need for sanctions against LSA members who may be responsible for various infractions. The contentious nature of member disagreements about diverse problems does more than give us pause; it confirms the need to promote conflict resolution among members. In addition, the WG hopes to explore potential mechanisms that might promote healing, greater inclusivity, and ideally more harmony among LSA members who harbor divergent points of view about various issues that have proved divisive.

Appreciation for LSA membership assistance and advice

Despite the adversarial tenor of several member disagreements, we are thankful to all LSA members who have contributed to the extensive dialogue that pertains to a wide array of LSA problems, as previously mentioned. Without that input, the WG would be less well-informed; if for no other reason that these contentious episodes, about different grievances at different times, may have been overlooked.

The EC recognizes the need to create codified rules for addressing allegations of wrongdoing, and we seek to avoid doing so in conceptual silos that might otherwise be devoid of LSA member input. If LSA members have ideas, suggestions, advice, or proposals, we encourage them to share them with the EC, and we will do our utmost to consider and include all ideas that will help us achieve these worthy goals.

Phase 2: Anticipated components of prospective adjudication procedures

The anticipated second phase of this venture is promissory at the present time because insufficient evidence is in hand to complete a fully informed PRP. As additional information becomes available, the second phase will begin.
**Problem identification process**

A problem identification process will need to be formulated, providing enough adaptability to allow members to register concerns that will inevitably vary greatly. Thus far sexual harassment, assault, racial intimidation, bullying, data misconduct, and allegations of social media malevolence are illustrative. The challenge before us is to create mechanisms capable of registering such allegations, which will in turn demand follow-up in different ways.

Much like a legal case brought to trial, LSA problem identification will require specification of the relevant parties involved in a given dispute on a case-by-case basis. In addition, depending upon the nature of the problem, it may be essential to protect the identity of one or more persons involved, similar to protections that are routinely provided to whistleblowers and typically found in much larger organizations than the LSA.

**Determination of the scope of LSA authority**

Although the inventory of problems that may come to light regarding the LSA are incomplete, those that have come to WG attention thus far include a combination of concerns that are within the purview of LSA authority, along with other problems that impact LSA members for which the LSA has no legal authority or contractual affiliation. In light of these facts, one of the earliest considerations that must be taken into account corresponds to a legal interpretation of which problems fall within LSA jurisdiction. The distinction being made is significant. If, for example, the LSA encroached upon matters that exceed its authority, this could incur liability that might have otherwise been avoided. Conversely, if the LSA were to overlook problems that it has an obligation to oversee, then potential liability might require member redress. At the stage of actual implementation, matters of appropriate authorization will require precise and legally defensible specification.

**Assessment of the corresponding evidence**

Many larger organizations have specific bodies that evaluate misconduct or malpractice among the ranks of its certified professionals. As a relatively small Society composed of language scientists, the LSA must establish remediation processes that meet membership needs. Although some models exist for other academic societies, those precedents may not be easily transferable. Nevertheless, we anticipate that part of the second phase will include ways to review how other organizations evaluate breaches of professional conduct, among other problem evaluation techniques that might be beneficial to PRP formulation.

**Opportunities for accused parties to justify and/or defend their actions**

An essential component of any eventual PRP must provide procedures whereby parties who are accused of wrongdoing are allowed to defend themselves, including the presentation of potentially exculpatory evidence. We adopt the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” as the basis for confirming the need to allow any accused party to be presented with the facts surrounding any accusations, and time to respond and if necessary prepare a defense.

**Adjudication options and procedures**

In much the same manner that legal resolutions do not always result in a trial, the second phase of this venture will need to contemplate a variety of relief or resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration, mediation, and other forms of professional review processes. One size will not fit all, and the need for flexibility will be essential.
Appeal processes
If we assume that some adjudicative body is created to judge allegations of LSA member misconduct, and if that body is authorized to impose sanctions, we envision that an appeal process must also be available. Again, we draw upon legal proceedings and precedents in anticipation of this prospect.

Final authoritative rulings
Assuming that appeal procedures are established, there will also be a need to create a final authorization body to accept, reject, or modify the final outcome of an appellate process. Suggestions are welcome regarding how best to establish a definitive judgment body for the LSA.

Potential pitfalls
The potential for cascading missteps could occur at nearly every developmental juncture envisioned here. Because LSA members are not human resource professionals, many of us who will take on the multifarious tasks before us will do so as novices, and therein lay a variety of potential pitfalls that may not be immediately evident. Once more formal processes are under development, it is possible that the combination of skills and resources that will be necessary to complete the job will become clearer. At this early stage we merely wish to state the obvious fact that things could go wrong, despite the best efforts and intentions of those charged with establishing the implementation of the envisioned PRP.

The grail we seek: A Problem Resolution Protocol for the LSA
Once this entire process has been completed, we hope that a well-functioning PRP will be implemented and become operational. As with most mechanisms, we envision the need for elasticity and adaptability. The “grail” will embody several components that, if working properly, will result in the resolution and/or remediation of the vast majority of differential LSA problems.

The perilous journey ahead
As we ponder next steps, a combination of platitudes and clichés leap to mind because the treacherous road we must travel is fraught with precarious and somewhat unpredictable factors that, singularly or collectively, could detain or derail this enterprise. We recognize that a combination of good fortune and goodwill will be necessary. In the meantime, we commit to doing our best to promote a positive and beneficial final outcome.

An appraisal of advantages, limitations, and vulnerabilities
As evidence has been gathered, evaluated, and categorized in support of anticipated plans of action, the WG performed a final appraisal of some advantages, limitations, and vulnerabilities that exist. The goal of the exercise was to detect gaps or missteps we may have overlooked; additionally, we seek transparency and we want LSA members to understand both our efforts and our assessment of the work yet to be done.

It was advantageous that we were provided with a substantial body of evidence regarding various LSA problems that have informed our judgment regarding the type and scope of resolution procedures that are likely to be required in the future, and we were able to draw upon our professional expertise to support pending policy developments. We are also mindful that we do not possess all of the necessary or desirable expertise to address the full scope and magnitude of past, present, and future LSA problems. Nor do we believe that we have unearthed a complete inventory of concerns that might need resolutions. A more essential limitation is that we may not yet comprehend other shortcomings that have yet to come to our attention.

Thanks substantially to a wide array of suggestions from both newer and older members of the Society, this new venture has the potential to create fair and equitable procedures capable of resulting in
resolutions and remediations of diverse professional problems. Even if we fall short of that goal, we believe that the journey now begun will be informative and beneficial. On a less optimistic note, one of the most obvious vulnerabilities to this enterprise is that the LSA does not have sufficient time or resources to complete the task(s). Additionally, cynical postings through social media are likely, if not inevitable, thereby potentially discouraging the positive efforts of those who wish to support the outcomes we very much hope to achieve. In much the same manner that the global pandemic has benefitted from the timely creation and effective distribution of vaccines, the present enterprise call for a comprehensive assessment of LSA problem resolution procedures that will take time to produce. And, much as baseless social media postings exacerbated vaccine hesitancy, we anticipate that social media tolls will criticize this venture as well. Regardless, the time that will be needed to complete this enterprise, much like the development of an effective vaccine, is difficult to predict. Other unforeseen vulnerabilities inevitably exist, and their lack of visibility has the lamentable potential of precluding the favorable outcomes we hope to produce.

Summary

The executive summary contains many of the substantive details that pertain to the larger mission of formulating an effective PRP. This summation differs somewhat, in the sense that it reflects upon the steps that have culminated in the production of this document. The need for impartiality and fairness has demanded that we consider a massive body of evidence, often including contentious and passionate viewpoints by some LSA members who, in our assessment, have come to vie with other LSA members as adversaries, or worse.

The EC has asked the WG to assess the available evidence and to contemplate how best to chart the course for the journey ahead, as previously described. History provides important lessons for us all, because every human enterprise – no matter how noble its ambition – is subject to human flaw and frailty. This report benefits substantially from experiences and insights that are unique to the field of linguistics. The work that remains to be completed will be performed extensively by volunteers composed substantially of LSA members who want to be supportive of emerging linguists in a rapidly changing professional climate.

Conclusion

The watershed events that have resulted in this report grew out of social media controversies that have yet to be fully resolved. Among the evidence reviewed in preparation of this document is an ardent plea that was written by newer LSA members. They produced a paper posted on LingBuzz. Of greater significance to the present mission, they stated that, “We recognize that BIPOC voices have a harder time being heard⁵. When we ask “Who speaks for us,” we hope to include all linguists in the conversation and to appreciate all voices (emphasis added).” We concur wholeheartedly, and while we recognize that our work is far from over, we respond affirmatively to this heartfelt appeal by now providing every LSA member with new opportunities to speak for themselves, and to do so discreetly, confidentially, and if desired, anonymously.

⁵ By remarkable coincidence, three authors of this report are United States slave descendants of African origin, each of whom has survived documented career threatening racial bias in various forms, including extortion. Some of the authors have also been the victims of sexual harassment. These facts – which are not well known – are being shared for informational purposes. Full disclosure and complete transparency requires that readers be made aware that these personal experiences, of professional survival as underrepresented linguists, have informed all WG deliberations and considerations. Additionally, this committee advocates greater inclusivity, and henceforth utilizes #LA BIPOC to acknowledge Latinx and Asian populations that #BIPOC does not capture.
Appendix I: Additional links to public evidence reviewed by the WG

http://www.nationalacademies.org/about/NA_186023.html

https://journals.linguisticsociety.org/proceedings/index.php/PLSA/article/view/4303

https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment

https://www.workplacefairness.org/sexual-harassment-legal-rights


http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/svaw/harassment/explore/5prevention.htm

https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.jchemed.9b00163


https://becauselanguage.com/5-the-lsa-open-letter/

https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/research-resources/importance-of-anti-bullying-laws

https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/key-components

https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/lgbtq-rights/

https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws

https://freedomforallamericans.org/states/

https://www.hrc.org/resources/the-equality-act


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6 A great deal of additional information has been shared with the WG, much of it in the form of personal communication by interested parties seeking to maintain confidentiality and/or anonymity, which we honor. In addition, the links provided in the appendix represent publicly available information that we have reviewed. They are not organized, and the occasional appearance of thematic clustering is purely coincidental.
• **Sexual Harassment** [8 January 1995]
• **Research with Human Subjects** [1 May 1992]
• **Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation** [March 1975]
• **Guidelines for Inclusive Language** [16 November 2016]
• **Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage** [1 December 1996]


[https://who-speaks-faq.carrd.co/](https://who-speaks-faq.carrd.co/)

[https://www.probono.net/decolonizingjustice/](https://www.probono.net/decolonizingjustice/)

American Anthropological Association


American Association for the Advancement of Science
[https://www.aaas.org/programs/fellows/revocation-process](https://www.aaas.org/programs/fellows/revocation-process)


American Association of Geographers

American Bar Association
[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_8_4_misconduct/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_8_4_misconduct/)

American Chemical Society
[https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/ethics/the-chemical-professionals-code-of-conduct.html](https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/ethics/the-chemical-professionals-code-of-conduct.html)

American Comparative Literature Association
[https://www.acla.org/about/acla-code-conduct](https://www.acla.org/about/acla-code-conduct)

American Economic Association
https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/aea-policy-harassment-discrimination/procedures

https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/aea-policy-harassment-discrimination/formal-complaint

American Historical Association


American Philosophical Association
https://www.apaonline.org/page/revocation

American Physiological Society
https://www.physiology.org/about/welcome/honors-and-awards-policy?SSO=Y

Association for Jewish Studies
https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/about-ajs/resolutions-policies/the-ajs-committee-on-sexual-misconduct/policies-and-procedures

Modern Language Association

National Association of Social Workers
https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Professional-Review/Revocation-of-Membership

https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Professional-Review

National Communications Association

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
https://rid.org/ethics/

Unitarian Universalist Association
https://www.uua.org/safe/misconduct/professional-misconduct-faq

https://www.city-journal.org/steven-pinker-letter


https://theopenscholar.com/media/1228
https://medium.com/@todd.snider/how-a-debate-among-linguists-became-a-prop-for-status-quo-champions-c61f08daf91a


https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/man-refused-cancelled/


https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vSaxrqycha5c-QB53lh0b9BWQgQUqVol-10wTv9iXZ4

https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/steven-pinker-i-had-to-speak-out-cancel-culture-is-orwellian-sr2q03nh6

https://twitter.com/toadmeister/status/1279209711989067777

https://www.ombudsassociation.org/the-foundations-course

https://ltcombudsman.org/omb_support/training

https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/conflict-resolution/conflict-resolution-strategies/

https://climb.pcc.edu/blog/what-are-the-five-conflict-resolution-strategies

https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=f72680c3-75c3-4339-b626-90b48f2acc06

Appendix II: Linguistic methods that have been variously utilized to evaluate some of the evidence appearing in Appendix I

**Discourse Analysis**

The vast majority of written evidence has been subjected to discourse analysis. Some of these assessments were informal and somewhat cursory, while others were more extensive, that is, whenever they revealed content calling for additional scrutiny, such as further semantic or syntactic analysis.

**Conversation Analysis**

Conversation Analysis (CA) proved to be most beneficial for evidence that was spoken, be that in a podcast or video recording. CA allows for the identification of important communicative evidence that is often concealed by written words alone, such as sarcasm or verbal displays of anger of jocularity. CA, in turn, revealed some instances where the potential for phonetic and phonological analyses were conducted or identified as being potentially worthy of closer evaluation to examine intonation, prosody, and timbre.

**Semantic evaluation**

The most obvious cases where semantic analyses proved beneficial center on potential ambiguity. What precisely did a writer or speaker intend by statements that might have more than one interpretation? Supplementary evaluation was frequently needed, in the form of additional pragmatic assessment, described next.

**Pragmatic assessment**

Pragmatic assessments often accompanied semantic disambiguation efforts, because they helped to frame a larger point of reference and/or context for any given comment, thereby lending additional clarity to author or speaker intention.

**Speech Act theory**

Some of the data were produced by people in an official capacity. As such, these statements – be they spoken or written – might have consequences worthy of further consideration. In addition, some statements that have been reviewed occasionally indicated the prospect of future actions that could impact the LSA and/or some of its members. We have frequently taken note of who produced various statements, whether or not they did so in some official capacity, seeking to determine if statements might have some future consequences.

**Forensic linguistic procedures**

The utilization of various forensic linguistic procedures herein has not been performed to help solve or resolve crimes. Rather, forensic linguistic methods have been helpful to the WG, such as efforts to help confirm accurate author identification in some instances.

**Phonological and phonetic consideration**

Thus far phonetic and phonological evaluations have been minimally relevant to the . However, CA has revealed instances where additional phonological or phonetic analyses might add further evidence that, at some future date, may be beneficial. For example, a verbal comment might employ intonation confirming its status as a question; other remarks clearly employed sarcasm. Phonetic and phonological evaluations are often quite beneficial to clarifying such evidence.
Utilization of syntactic and morphological observations

Morphological and syntactic considerations have also been minor. Writers and speakers often produce statements that may not reflect their intended remarks. We have noted some instances of atypical syntactic configurations that have, at times, exceeded our capacity for clear understanding.