

## *Journal of Family Psychology:* Past, Present, and Future

This issue marks the inception of my term as editor of the *Journal of Family Psychology (JFP)*. The journal, in its 24th year, is like a young adult. It has achieved a level of professional identity, independence, and competence consistent with this developmental phase. I feel honored and privileged to be at the helm of the journal at a time at this juncture of young adulthood. As the editorial torch is passed to me, I am mindful of the significant responsibilities that have been entrusted to me. I conceptualize my role as that of mentor, guide, and catalyst of the ongoing evolution and success of *JFP*. The journal aims to provide a platform that supports the transmission of new scholarly discoveries in the field and I am excited about offering a structure that supports family psychology scholars in building upon our intellectual treasures and advancing our understanding about couples and families in novel and meaningful ways.

### **What is Family Psychology?**

A recognized specialty within psychology, family psychology is an approach to understanding human functioning and treating problems that is based on a systemic epistemology and recognizes that human interactions occur within a matrix of individual, interpersonal, environmental/macrosystemic, and sociocultural contexts. According to the systemic epistemology in which family psychology is embedded, it is assumed that the emotional functioning of individuals within a group is interdependent so that the feelings and behavior of one person can only be understood within the context of other group members. This epistemology uses systemic thinking to guide the understanding of human behavior, assessments, interventions, and research design and methodology. As families have become increasingly diverse and complex units that span the life cycle and that interact with other systems, the specialty of family psychology has broadened and become more inclusive.

### **Role of the *JFP* in the Field**

*JFP*, first a divisional journal and now a journal of the American Psychological Association (APA) is a top-tier journal in the family field and in psychology. Although the field of family therapy has a number of high quality journals, there is no question that the *JFP* is the premiere journal for empirical studies of family processes, family assessments and interventions, and relevant methodologies. Family psychologists, researchers and clinicians alike, look to the journal for timely and relevant scholarly writings.

### **Scope and Direction of *JFP***

*JFP* offers cutting-edge, ground-breaking, state-of-the-art, and innovative empirical research with real-world applicability in the field of family psychology. This premiere family research journal is devoted to the study of the family system, broadly defined, from multiple perspectives and to the application of psychological methods to advance knowledge related to family research, patterns and processes, and assessment and intervention, as well as to policies relevant to advancing the quality of life for families.

Coverage includes empirical research in the areas of: couple and family patterns and processes, life stages, transitions, and stress and coping; health and illness across the family life cycle; couple and family diagnosis; couple and family assessment; couple and family intervention studies; family focused prevention programs; families in transition (separation, divorce, and single parenting; remarriage and the stepfamily; adoption; death); family violence; employment and the family; family and other systems; diversity–ethnicity/race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability; methodological and statistical advances in qualitative and quantitative research; policies related to families;

theories related to families and systems; family psychology education and training; and professional issues in family psychology.

I trust that the themes for the journal will shift as the field evolves and as we witness changes in what issues are most salient to families. However, some of the key areas of focus that I anticipate will be highlighted in *JFP* over the next 6 years will include: major challenges faced by families today (e.g., changing family structures, work-life integration, trauma, war, terrorism, poverty, discrimination, healthcare, globalization); diversity and culture defined broadly in a fashion that goes beyond ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual orientation; innovative methodologies, such as the use of mixed methods approaches; creative and new theories related to families and systems; efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination trials of intervention and prevention programs; family psychology education/training, practice, and policy/advocacy.

### **Editorial Team and Policy**

To effectively offer quality scholarly reviews over a content area as broad and diverse as family psychology, I am grateful that five well-respected family psychology researchers with wide-ranging interests have agreed to collaborate with me as associate editors: Annmarie Cano, Barbara Fiese, Ernest Jouriles, Martie Thompson, and Mark Whisman. They bring particular expertise in the areas of couples interaction processes, couples assessment and interventions. They also are knowledgeable about family assessment, family risk and protective factors, parent-child interactions, growing up in high-risk family environments, family violence, self- and other-directed violence in a family context, children and families facing physical and mental health challenges, and parenting and family interventions. Further, they have wisdom related to families at various stages of the life cycle ranging from efforts to conceive through aging and death, diversity in families (including but not limited to ethnicity/race, social class, sexual orientation, ability status, religion), and statistics and methodology including mixed methods. In addition to shepherding the review process for many manuscripts, the associate editors will co-edit special sections and serve as consultants to me with regard to the direction of the journal.

My associate editors and I will do our best to oversee a review and decision-making process in which we invite appropriate individuals to review each paper and encourage them to provide timely, thoughtful, constructive, and diplomatic critiques. We will work towards integrating reviewers' feedback along with our own insights into the final decision letter and craft fair and balanced action letters that acknowledge the strengths of the manuscript, address areas for improvement, and clearly convey the editorial decision and its rationale.

Fortunately, an impressive cadre of top scholars agreed to dedicate their time and energy to serving as consulting editors for *JFP*. The editorial board is populated by psychologists, including early career psychologists, with varied backgrounds in terms of areas of scholarly inquiry, orientations, work and research settings, and personal demographics. Individuals interested in serving as consulting editors should feel free to contact me.

The Instructions to Authors now appear on the Website, as well as in the journal. High-quality research papers that advance the field will remain the major emphasis of the journal. In keeping with our focus on empirical studies, we will encourage authors of each paper published to do a sophisticated job of highlighting the practice and/or policy implications of the work, in addition to underscoring future directions for empirical study. Like many journals in recent years, *JFP* is interested in applying the criteria of the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) for randomized clinical trials and intervention studies. The 30 page limit for research reports and 12 page limit for brief reports is being strictly enforced, although authors have the option of placing supplemental materials on the Website if their manuscript is accepted for publication. As in the past, all manuscripts will be sent to reviewers with knowledge in the areas covered in the manuscript itself, at least one of whom will be a consulting editor. Other ad hoc reviewers will come from psychology, as well as related disciplines. While all ad hoc reviewers will be listed annually in the journal, those ad hoc reviewers who do a significant number of reviews will be acknowledged as principal reviewers. At the present time, our current editorial team has an excellent turnaround time for reviews (mean ~45 days), which we are committed to maintaining.

*JFP* has adopted the Collaborative Review Model (CRM), which is the approved APA Publications and Communications Board. A mentoring model for manuscript reviewing and general introduction into the APA publications pipeline, it allows a participating reviewer to consider using others in a mentor/mentee review process. The CRM requires (a) that prior approval from the inviting editor be obtained; (b) that the reviewing mentor train the graduate student/intern/postdoctoral resident/early career psychologist mentee about the scholarly, legal, and ethical parameters before distributing a confidential manuscript; (c) that the review is a collaborative product developed at the direction of the senior reviewer; and (d) that all reviewers' names are submitted with the review so that trainees and early career psychologists receive credit for their work. Thus, the CRM mentorship program involves a total collaborative "working together jointly" type of review in which the senior person walks the trainee or early career psychologist through the review process step-by-step and mentors the trainee or early career psychologist in a repeated series of meetings. Please visit the *JFP* Website for more details related to CRM policy.

### Acknowledgments

*JFP*'s growth and development is attributable partly to the outstanding leadership and nurturant "parenting" it received from its prior editors over the past two decades, Drs. Howard A. Liddle, Ronald F. Levant, Ross D. Parke, and Anne E. Kazak. Their success in guiding *JFP* through its early years and in offering readers high quality family psychology research was bolstered by the enormous contributions of many associate editors, consulting editors, ad hoc reviewers, and authors who provided the vision, creative ideas, and scholarly contributions. This has resulted in the *JFP* enjoying such a prominent place in the field. I will do my best to capitalize upon the solid foundation established by the journal's four previous editors. My colleagues have set a high standard for the *JFP* and I will strive continuously to keep this journal what it is, one of the most respected family focused periodicals in the world.

I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, Dr. Kazak, for her stellar contributions. It was a pleasure to serve as one of her associate editors. *JFP* and the field of family psychology owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to her for the enormous scientific contributions that the journal made during her tenure. In addition to the high quality papers that appeared in the journal, during her term as editor, *JFP* published a number of valuable and influential special sections on topics of vital significance to family psychology: immigration, sleep and family processes, sibling relationships, methodology, public health perspectives on family interventions, and relational disorders and relational processes. Under her direction, we witnessed the journal's impact factor rise to an impressive 2.055. The journal is now ranked 30/88 in terms of psychology-clinical journals and 5/31 with regard to family studies journals. Dr. Kazak has been enormously helpful to me during this transition, and I am grateful to her for her wisdom, astute observations, and generous support and tutelage. Unquestionably, she has been incredibly giving with her time and her insights on what it takes to be a highly effective editor, which is no surprise, because she is such a talented editor herself.

I also want to thank the staff at the APA for their encouragement, guidance, and responsiveness. They too have made this daunting task seem more manageable and even fun.

### Editorial Stance

I welcome feedback from my editorial team, ad hoc reviewers, authors, and readers about the review process, possible special sections, or articles that have been published. Special sections will generally be co-edited by one of the Associate Editors and a family psychology scholar. I intend to have an open door/always available via email policy that will enable us to interact in an ongoing fashion during my 6 year tenure as editor. I will strive to be collaborative, encouraging, open-minded, and accessible editor of this illustrious journal. I am dedicated to highlighting the strengths of my colleagues; providing direction and leadership without micromanaging; and supporting flexibility and diversity in terms of perspectives, areas of focus, and methodology.

I will work hard to ensure that the journal continues with its long tradition of excellence and with its interdisciplinary appeal to clinical-researchers, scientists interested in basic family processes, psychotherapists working with couples and families, family psychology educators and trainers, and students learning about family psychology. For me, editing is intellectually stimulating and I appreciate the chance to interact with other scholars and shape the field. Thus, I am hopeful that in my role as editor, I will not only have the good fortune to give back to the field and help the field continue to progress and flourish, but that I also will expand my own horizons and understanding of the richly textured and meaningfully evolving field of family psychology. I welcome ongoing dialogue with you and I can be reached at [nkaslow@emory.edu](mailto:nkaslow@emory.edu)

—*Nadine J. Kaslow, Editor*