

From the Editor.

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Article:

Volume 70, number 1, is the first issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family* (JMF) produced by the editorial office at The University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Most of the credit for this issue, however, should be extended to my predecessor, Alexis Walker, who edited all of the articles published in this issue. Effective February 1, 2007, our office in North Carolina began processing new submissions to JMF; gradually we began receiving revised manuscripts, and by September 30, 2007, we were processing all revised manuscripts, whether they were invited by me or by outgoing Editor Walker. During this 8-month period, we processed 359 manuscripts. We relied heavily on 94 Editorial Board members and 306 occasional reviewers to facilitate our goal of providing timely, thoughtful, and constructive feedback to authors. The average time from manuscript submission to editorial decision during this period was between 7 and 8 weeks.

As Editor, I want to strongly encourage submissions addressing a wide variety of substantive issues affecting families. Following in the rich tradition established by my predecessors, I am interested in research implementing diverse theoretical and methodological approaches and work that expresses diverse paradigms, values, and worldviews. Most important, I want to facilitate the outstanding reputation that JMF has earned as the flagship journal for family research. That reputation has been built by maintaining rigorous standards and by appealing to a multidisciplinary base of readers, authors, reviewers, and board members.

JMF has experienced tremendous growth over the past couple of years in the number of manuscripts that are submitted and reviewed. The sheer volume of submissions, now totaling more than 700 per year, has necessitated that the Journal implement a Deputy Editor system similar to other premier journals in the field. In this new structure, Deputy Editors are assigned manuscripts in specific areas, on specific populations, or using specific methods that take advantage of their substantive and methodological expertise, and they serve as action editors for these manuscripts. Each Deputy Editor is assigned a few manuscripts per month. It is our hope that this system will both reduce turnaround time and, perhaps more important, improve the quality of feedback and suggestions that authors receive from action editors. I am excited to announce that four Deputy Editors have begun serving in this capacity: Cheryl Buehler, David Johnson, Ralph LaRossa, and Velma McBride Murry.

As we begin planning the Decade in Review issue to be published in 2010, I am not actively considering special issues or other features that would consume space that is needed for regular submissions. As space allows, I do plan to continue popular practices such as commissioned essays by leaders in the field, exchanges on timely or controversial topics, and mini-symposia.

Recent trends are placing unusual demands on Journal space. First, as already noted, we have experienced dramatic increases in submissions. As would be expected, there has been a corresponding increase in high-quality manuscripts, leading to more accepted papers. In addition, the average length of submitted papers has increased. As a result, the Deputy Editors and I are actively monitoring manuscript length and we remind authors (and reviewers) that we need to enforce JMF guidelines that manuscripts should not exceed 30 pages total.

One of the many reasons for the premier status of JMF is the history of thorough, competent, insightful, and constructive reviews provided by members of the editorial board as well as ad hoc reviewers. After reading several hundred reviews over recent months, I am very pleased that the vast majority of reviews continue to be timely, thoughtful, and of high quality. In general, the commitment and dedication exhibited by both regular and occasional reviewers is quite impressive. Excellent reviews have strengthened the finished products that appear in these pages, improving the clarity and precision of the writing and elevating the theoretical and methodological rigor of the work. I have observed, however, that many scholars (including established, widely recognized experts in the field) decline opportunities to provide reviews. Further, and in some ways more problematic, a sizable minority of reviews are very brief, superficial, and/or generally not helpful. As Alan Booth (1991) observed upon completing his term as editor of JMF, these practices threaten the core of the scientific enterprise — the peer review process. I urge more scholars to participate in this process, to assist us (and authors) by providing detailed reviews, to teach students how to evaluate manuscripts and write competent reviews, and to suggest names of students and junior scholars who are qualified and willing to serve as reviewers.

I am indebted to many people who assisted me during the editorial transition. First, I am extremely grateful to Alexis Walker for her generous guidance and valuable advice on all phases of editing this Journal. Diane Cushman and John Pepper at NCFR work hard to support and promote JMF, as does Beetna Kim, the Production Editor at Wiley-Blackwell. Sally Gallagher served capably as Book Review Editor and she assisted with the transition to her successor in this role, Heather Helms. The editorial assistants at Oregon State University, Christine Mouzong and Rica Amity, were very helpful in teaching us the many details and nuances of managing the daily workflow associated with processing manuscripts. I am enormously appreciative of the editorial assistants at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro who have assumed these responsibilities: Tracey Bridges and Sharon Ghazarian. Working with these people is a treasure and editing JMF is an honor. We will do our best to ensure that JMF remains the journal of first choice for family scholars.

REFERENCE

- Booth, A. (1991). Editorial comment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 829-830.