



Editorial

Year 3: A State of the Union Address

At the opening of Congress each year, the president of the United States delivers a state of the union address-an analysis of the country's strengths, areas of weakness, and future goals. After 3 years as editor of this new journal, I would like to offer my "state of the union" analysis of this journal.

The first manuscript was received in May 1994, just around the time the journal was officially launched at the successful Third International Family Nursing Conference in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The first issue of this quarterly journal was subsequently published in February 1995; as of May 1997, 10 issues have been published. Since that first manuscript, I have received more than 170 manuscripts over 3 years, with 150 of these sent for review. Initial editorial decisions on manuscripts received from May 1995 to June 1996 are reported in Table 1. The outcome of the major revision (revise and resubmit) category of manuscripts is reported in Table 2. The acceptance rate for this journal (including resubmitted manuscripts) in the 1st year of publication (1995) was 29%; the acceptance rate for 1996 was 31 %. The good news for prospective authors is that at this present time, I do not have a backlog of accepted manuscripts waiting for publication space.

On receipt, each manuscript is categorized as research, clinical practice, theory, education, or policy. The categories of all submitted manuscripts sent for review (from May 1994 to June 1996) are shown in Table 3.

Further analysis of key words used to describe submitted manuscripts by population, health problem, or research method show the following trends:

1. The top six categories of topics from 1994-1996 were pregnant and child-bearing families, chronic illness, families with children and adolescents, families experiencing life-shortening illness (critical illness, death, loss), cross-cultural families, and aging families.

Table 1: Initial Editorial Decisions on Manuscripts Received 1994-1996

	May 1994-May 1995 n	May 1994-May 1995 percentage	June 1995-June 1996 n	June 1995-June 1996 percentage
Publish (no revision)	5	8	6	10
Accept (pending minor revision)	13	21	13	21
Major revision (revise & resubmit)	28	46	14	22
Reject	15	25	29	47
Totals	61	100	62	100

Table 2: Outcome of Major Revision Manuscripts May 1994-June 1996

	n	Percentage
Accepted	15	36
Rejected	4	9
Never resubmitted	18	43
Still in revision	5	12
Totals	42	100

Table 3: Manuscript Categories (Received/Reviewed) 1994-1996

	May 1994-May 1995 n	May 1994-May 1995 Percentage	June 1995-June 1996 n	June 1995- June 1996 Percentage
Research	44	72.2	42	67.8
Clinical Practice	14	23.0	16	25.8
Theory	1	1.6	1	1.6
Policy	1	1.6	0	0
Education	1	1.6	3	4.8
Totals	61	100	62	100

2. There were surprisingly few manuscripts about parenting, violence/abuse/incest, addictions/substance abuse, gay/lesbian families, health promotion, families with psychosocial problems, single-parent families, step-parent families, research instruments, or research methodology.

Over the past 2 years of publication (Volume 1 and Volume 2), 36 articles, 2 responses, 2 conference reports, 12 book reviews, and 1 review essay were published. A wonderful special issue, "Family Health Care Provider Relationships," was very ably guest edited by Drs. Sandra Faux and Kathy Knafel in May 1996. The distribution of published manuscripts by category is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Manuscripts Categories (Published) 1995 and 1996

	Vol. 1 1995 n	Vol. 1 1995 Percentage	Vol. 2 1996 n	Vol. 2 1996 Percentage
Research	11	69	17	85
Clinical Practice	3	19	2	10
Theory	1	6	1	5
Education	1	6	1	5
Policy	0	0	0	0
Totals	16	100	20	100

Each manuscript, ideally, receives three reviews (including a review by a member of the editorial board). The review process is double-blind, that is, both the author and reviewer remain unknown to each other. The comments and constructive feedback of the reviewers are sent to the author. In addition, each reviewer receives a copy of all of the reviewers' comments, including the editor's decision, thus providing an opportunity to compare and contrast one's own assessment with the evaluation provided by other reviewers. Douglas H. Sprenkle, Ph.D., editor of the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, has given us permission to reprint his journal's "Review Quality Rating Scale." It is a useful set of criteria for reviewers and authors alike to keep in mind (see Table 5).

The average time it takes to receive an initial editorial decision on a manuscript, starting from the time it arrives at my office, is 15 weeks, with a tremendous range from 8 weeks to 34 weeks! Timely responses by reviewers are greatly appreciated by both authors and the editor. It is my observation that reviewer deadlines seem to be more readily met if the review deadline occurs during the academic term; late spring and summer seems to be more problematic for reviewers to return their comments in a timely fashion. Another contributing factor to the timeliness issue is that the journal infrastructure remains very small. I hold a full-time academic position and do not receive workload compensation for my editorial work. I also work without the help of assistant or associate editors. However, I am grateful for the secretarial assistance received over the past 3 years from my assistant, Marlene Baier, who is employed by the Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary.

Table 5: Review Quality Rating Scale*

Heroic review

Evidences the expenditure of a truly exceptional amount of time and energy.
Discusses specific strengths and weaknesses with great clarity and in unusual detail.
Well above and beyond the call of duty!

Comprehensive review

Evidences a very careful and reflective reading of the manuscript. Discusses specific strengths and weaknesses in ways that are clear and very helpful to both the authors and the editor.

Good review

Evidences a careful reading of the manuscript but offers feedback that is more general than the previous two categories. Often omits either strengths or weaknesses and is somewhat less clear.

Fair review

Evidences modest but acceptable effort. Lacks substance or specificity and is only somewhat helpful to the author and editor.

Weak review

Gives impression of minimal effort. Provides little solid or useful feedback to either author or editor.
Vague and/ or caustic.

Poor review

Little more than a vote. Gives editor and author no helpful feedback.

*Used with the permission of Douglas H. Sprenkle, Ph.D., editor, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.

The *Journal of Family Nursing* presently enjoys the support of a fair number of individual and institutional subscribers, but we need to continue to attract new support. The best way to promote this journal is through personal contact. Your assistance in telling your students, your colleagues, attendees at conferences, participants in your workshops, and such will help this journal flourish. Order forms and promotional materials are available from Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA 91320, phone: (805) 499-0721; fax: (805) 499-0871; website: <http://www.sagepub.com>. Thank you for your commitment to the nursing of families and your support of this journal.

The mission of the journal is clear: to publish high quality manuscripts that center on the unique intersection between understanding family functioning in health and illness and provide professional nursing care to families based on that understanding. I would like to continue to publish the highest quality manuscripts that focus on research, clinical practice, theory, and education. I would like to see more balance between research articles and the clinical practice, theory, and/ or education articles. I would like to see more interdisciplinary perspectives offered, as well more attention to issues of family diversity. I would like to move in the direction of grouping submitted manuscripts by themes and publishing articles under each of the four categories in every issue. I would like to continue to recruit guest editors to provide leadership for special issues. I would like to continue to rely on my very capable editorial board, who offer sound ideas, encouragement, and advice for solving tough dilemmas. I would like to continue to recruit highly qualified, committed reviewers capable of offering timely, comprehensive, and even heroic reviews! I dream about the day I will have to declare a moratorium on the acceptance of new manuscripts because of an overwhelming backlog of excellent manuscripts.

The President concludes his state of the union address with a one-liner assessment: strong, weak, etc. In February 1997, my bottom line is, "Ladies and gentlemen, the state of the union is growing stronger." This journal has become a home for the publication of ideas related to the nursing of families. However, I ask, is this journal relevant? Has this journal expanded or perturbed your thinking about family nursing? Has this journal provided new ideas for family research, education, and policy development? And most importantly, has this journal made a difference to nursing practice with families?

Janice M. Bell, RN., Ph.D. *Editor*