MESSAGE FROM THE NEW EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Greetings. I am truly honored to be voted the 5th editor-in-chief of the Journal of Black Psychology (JBP). The JBP was founded in 1974 per the vision of Dr. Robert Williams and the feasibility study conducted by Dr. Reginald Jones (Williams, 2008). Following in the giant footsteps of previous JBP Editors-in-Chief William David Smith, Curtis Banks, Kathleen Burlew, and outgoing Editor-in-Chief Shawn Utsey, I am humbled by the opportunity to continue their outstanding legacy. I would like to briefly share my vision for the JBP in the areas of (a) content, (b) impact factor, (c) review lag, (d) reviewers, (d) structural changes, and (e) commitment to high-quality publications.

CONTENT

The JBP has been distinguished as a multidisciplinary psychology journal by the diversity, breadth, and quality of published scholarship that contributes toward understanding the experiences and behaviors of Black populations. The purpose and scope of the journal will not change in this regard. However, areas of research that have been underrepresented will be especially sought after. According to the latest content analysis of the JBP (Cokley, Caldwell, Miller, & Muhammad, 2001), the broadly defined category of personality research (e.g., racial identity) accounted for the largest number of published articles (16%), followed by social behavior research (12%), and physiological functioning and health psychology (8%). The categories of child and adolescent development, cognition, and African-centered research were tied at 6%, followed by education and theoretical/conceptual articles (5%), followed by clinical application, test development,
and family research (4%). I have previously written that racial identity articles are more likely to be published in the JBP than in any other journal (Cokley, 2007), and the outgoing editor-in-chief has commented on the number of racial identity manuscripts that the journal receives. This is perhaps not surprising. The JBP will remain committed to publishing high-quality research in all of the aforementioned areas, as long as the research contributes new and important knowledge related to the psychological functioning and betterment of the conditions of Black people. The JBP will be especially committed to increasing articles in areas of dire importance to the well-being of Black people, such as health psychology and clinical application. I also echo the sentiments of Utsey (2008) in saying that the JBP would like to see more submissions (especially empirical studies) in the area of African-centered psychology. Finally, I strongly encourage authors to consider submitting major review (conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and integrative) articles to the JBP. Review articles are especially important because they tend to be more highly cited than research articles, and this ultimately helps raise the impact factor of the journal.

IMPACT FACTOR

Last summer was a historic one because it marks the first time the JBP has been given an impact factor. The impact factor is an index that ranks scientific journals by measuring the frequency with which the “average article” in a journal has been cited in a particular year. While it is a somewhat controversial metric, it nonetheless impacts the professional reputation of scientific journals and is a factor that influences whether researchers and scholars will submit their work for publication. One important way to continue increasing the visibility and status of the journal is to have a high impact factor. The impact factor for the JBP was 0.86, which places it 43rd out of 102 multidisciplinary psychology journals. This is an outstanding accomplishment given that it is the first impact factor that the journal has received. To put this in perspective, the 2006 impact factor for the Journal of Applied Social Psychology was 0.56; for the Journal of Black Studies it was 0.16; for the Journal of Counseling and Development (the American Counseling Association’s flagship journal), 0.56; for the Journal of Career Development, 0.85; and for Educational and Psychological Measurement it was 0.92. However, we are not satisfied with remaining at this level. I along with the associate editors and the editorial consultants will work on a strategic plan that results in a gradual increase in the impact factor. An increase in the impact factor will contribute to making the JBP
an even more desirable publication outlet for researchers conducting strong empirical research with populations of African descent.

**REVIEW LAG**

I want to continue the outstanding work of Dr. Shawn Utsey regarding the amount of time it takes to review a manuscript. In particular, my priority will be to continue maintaining, if not further reducing, the review time of manuscripts from submission to disposition. The reputation that a journal has for timeliness of reviews remains one of the top reasons authors will submit, or not submit, their research. The journal currently enjoys what I believe to be fairly competitive lag times for reviews. This is particularly impressive given the relatively modest human resources the journal has in terms of numbers of available reviewers. We have recently changed online submission systems from MS Tracker to Sage Publications Manuscript Central. Manuscript Central includes more features that make the management of journal operations easier and more streamlined. As with any change in systems, it will take time for everyone (authors, reviewers, and editors) to become fully acclimated. We ask for your patience during this transition.

**REVIEWERS**

An ongoing challenge for the JBP has been getting sufficient numbers of reviewers for the manuscripts that are submitted. Reviewers are the lifeblood of the functioning of the journal, and without adequate numbers of them we run the risk of burning out reliable reviewers. I have increased the size of the editorial board with additional accomplished scholars. A larger editorial board will serve to more evenly distribute the workload, which has increased over the past few years because of the greater visibility and influence of the JBP. I have also increased the pool of ad hoc reviewers. If you are interested in serving as an ad hoc reviewer for the JBP, please e-mail me at kevin.cokley@mail.utexas.edu.

**STRUCTURAL CHANGES: BRIEF REPORTS SECTION**

One major structural change I propose is the addition of a Brief Reports section. A Brief Reports section is designed to give exposure to studies that
(a) have some methodological limitation (e.g., small sample size, measures with little or no psychometric support), (b) are limited in scope, (c) contain novel or provocative findings that need to be replicated, or (d) contain other limitations (e.g., nonsignificant findings) that are otherwise deemed by the editor-in-chief or associate editors to have probative value to the discipline of Black psychology. Several major journals have a Brief Reports section (e.g., Journal of Counseling Psychology, Journal of Family Psychology, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology). Authors can also indicate in their cover letters that the manuscript is being submitted as a brief report and that a full research report is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. The brief report should be between 12 and 15 pages.

COMMITMENT TO HIGH-QUALITY PUBLICATIONS

Most important to me, the associate editors, and the editorial consultants, is our commitment to publishing the highest quality articles. Like all academic journals, the standards of the JBP have evolved over the years. I agree with Harris (2003), who states that “research improves as the research base grows and as our methods and understandings become more sophisticated and advanced” (p. 451). Harris goes on to say that this includes “adequate evidence that measures used are reliable and valid,” or more correctly, that the scores reported on measures are reliable and valid. At a bare minimum, researchers should use psychometrically adequate and theoretically relevant instruments that will allow them to answer their research questions and to make valid conclusions about their findings. We are also committed to publishing high-quality qualitative research that is situated within an operating research paradigm (e.g., consensual qualitative research, grounded theory, phenomenological approach).

SUMMARY

I believe that being the editor-in-chief of the JBP is more than just a job or title . . . it is a labor of love and commitment of service to the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPs). In my opinion, there is nothing more important to fulfilling the mission of the ABPs than to assume the stewardship of the ABPs’s primary vehicle for disseminating research and scholarship on people of African descent. The responsibility for assuming the stewardship of the JBP
is not one that I take lightly. I look forward to continuing and expanding on the
great legacy of the JBP. Peace and blessings.

Kevin Cokley
Editor-in-Chief

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