

## EDITORIAL

# The New Is Also The Old

With this issue, a new era in the life of your *Journal* begins. From this year, the *ANZJFT* will be published by Blackwell in the UK. It thus joins an impressive stable of professional and academic journals, and will share an international publisher's scope for promoting institutional subscriptions, on-line availability, and other prospects. However, as your new editors, we can assure you that the *Journals* strong bi-national tradition will be upheld. Indeed, we hope to strengthen some of the *Journal's* uniquely 'local' features: humour, reporting of grass-roots therapeutic activity, readability, and the provision of a variety of specialised sections for writing of different types and purposes.

You will already have noticed some changes to the cover, and to other aspects of the *Journals* appearance. These alterations were not made lightly. The *Journal* needs to increase its subscription numbers within its countries of origin, and to speak to a wider constituency than at present. The use of the acronym *ANZJFT* on the front cover is deliberate: '*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*' is a mouthful to say (fifteen syllables, to be precise), and the *Journal* needs a short 'working title'. The descriptive subtitle, 'Innovative and Contextual Approaches to Human Problems' has been chosen to make explicit what family therapists have always known, but what most outsiders have not: that the term 'family therapy' denotes something much broader than just 'a garage for repairing families' (as Selvini so eloquently put it). We do, in fact, stand for an innovative—a *new*—way of thinking about human problems and human potential, a way that acknowledges context (in its widest sense). Too often, we have been seduced into equating 'context' or 'system' with 'the other family members' or (a little wider) 'the extended family'. We need to think more widely than that. Too often, we have equated 'innovative' with merely 'clever' or 'fashionable'. What is profoundly new may also be profoundly old.

'Contextual', to our minds, implies *any* widening of the frame of reference within which problems are normally viewed. 'Positive connotation' is one way of widening the frame; an intergenerational approach is another; the incorporation of constructivist perspectives on human suffering is another; a focus on the 'invisible' contexts of gender, class, and ethnicity is another; willingness to acknowledge the co-evolution of mind and body is yet another. What systems theory has taught us is that things make sense when we pay attention to the web of relationships within which they are embedded. That web is not, ultimately, confined to the human world but, as Bateson and Maturana show, includes the entire biosphere. *That* is the ultimate meaning of 'contextual'.

So: a new working title, and a new descriptive subtitle, that together hopefully will remind us of what we stand for, and what we have still to accomplish.

One of the proudest achievements of our predecessor, Max Cornwell, was to work tirelessly for social justice and equal opportunity within the pages of the *Journal*. The graphic border that previously framed the contents on the front cover embodied imagery representative of indigenous peoples of our two nations, acknowledging Pacific Islander, Aboriginal and Maori cultures as formative to our modern multicultural identities, and as vitally alive today. That imagery remains part of the *ANZJFT's* new cover design. Family therapy often seems a very Western phenomenon, practised mostly by people of European extraction, and apparently dependent on an ideology of individualism and quasi-technological 'quick fix' solutions to entrenched, longterm problems. Yet this is ultimately only part of the truth. Family therapy has also stood for a rediscovery of the power and significance of the extended kinship system, for an acknowledgement of the survival of meaning beyond the grave, for an honouring of the 'patterns that connect' all of us to our relatives and ancestors, painful and shameful though some of those ties may seem. Here is a vital point of connection between the sort of knowledge family therapy teaches, and the sort of knowledge that many non-Western cultures have always known and preserved. We can, and should, learn from each other.

In future editorials, we shall be setting out further dimensions of our policy. For now, we need simply to say that we are the last people to embrace the cheap rhetoric of 'exciting innovation' so beloved of today's corporate style managers in human and educational services. Our family backgrounds across many generations, along with our own individual adult life experiences, have taught us that when we think we are doing something 'new' and uniquely personal, it is likely to represent something that has already happened before; that nothing of value in life is ever discarded; and that the past lives on in the present, in a myriad ways, not all of them available to consciousness.

Max Cornwell, and before him, Michael White, will live on in the pages of the 'new' *ANZJFT*. We want the *Journal* to be a place where differences can be acknowledged without rancour, where diversity can be celebrated, and where the past and the future can inform one another: the new is also the old.

Hugh and Maureen Crago  
Editors

## IN THE LAND OF HO

### An Allegory for Family Therapists

Once upon a time in the Land of Ho, many of the people, even though they wanted to be happy in their families, had ways of being themselves that encouraged all sorts of problems. Some would quarrel, others would go silent, some would try too hard, others would try too little, some would take, others wouldn't give, and so on. It all led to a lot of stress and unhappiness.

One day, a small group of the people of Ho decided they would work together to help the families not yet with troubles to keep the troubles away, and those with troubles already, to get rid of the troubles. This was an exciting time. The group grew.

Different ones brought different ideas. Some thought of creative ways to help families with troubles. Even more exciting, others thought of ways for families to help themselves. Others still heard about good ideas from far off lands; these ideas often fitted their own people's troubles very well indeed.

The group spread throughout the Land of Ho. So distant were they from one another that they decided to meet each year for a Grand Forum. This was a wonderful time. More new ideas came from the four corners of the land; new ways to banish troubles were talked about day and night. There was laughter, and serious talk; concentration on ideas, and dancing.

People listened and talked, listened and talked, listened and talked. People debated without being scared of someone having another idea; no one worried about being right, because, in a funny way, they all had something right to say even when it was different.

But sadly, things began to go wrong for these people and for their Grand Forum. They began to have all the troubles of the troubled families they were trying to help. It became very

important to have the right idea. Though there was no prize, competition to be most right became most important. In order to be most right and most important, it became even more important to make other ideas, and their carriers, as wrong as possible.

Debating times, enthusiastic discussion times, being wrong and not feeling bad times, laughing trusting times, grew less and less. At the Grand Forum, people huddled together about those they thought were most right. Groups of the 'have-good-ideas' didn't mix with the groups 'thought-not-to-have-good-ideas', and vice versa. There was nervousness and eye glancing; great tip-toeing too; even whisperings and silly things like that.

In the beginning, there had been room for everyone's ideas. Truth could not be owned, and there were constant surprises about where it could be found, and who might have the next piece to add. But now correctness, too, had taken over. Some people grew big, others grew small; some very big and some very small. Some were obviously closer to the Truth In The Skies than others. Being correct and right became more important than helping the troubled families. It was such a strange state of affairs.

In the end, they became a bit of a laughing stock. Such good and clever people making so much nonsense. They were still good and still clever, but it was hard to see.

And it made them unhappy. They probably didn't really want to be like this. They didn't know what to do.

Do you have any ideas that might help these people who wanted to help the people of Ho?

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