

Presidents and Pioneers: A Celebration of APSAC's 35th Anniversary

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To celebrate APSAC's 35th Anniversary, we have created a two-volume special issue that highlights the history and future of APSAC, specifically, and the field of child maltreatment, broadly. To do so, we enlisted practitioners and new scholars to interview APSAC's presidents and pioneers. We did this to preserve history, make connections between those who built APSAC and those who will help continue APSAC's growth into the future, and introduce new voices to the *Advisor* and APSAC.

This special issue was more than a year in the making, and it could have easily expanded into another year to capture more contributions of presidents and pioneers and to engage more practitioners and new scholars. What follows next is an outline of the experience we as editors went through in shaping our final format for the special issue. We highlight this not as a way to "get a pat on the back" for getting the job done, but to showcase the challenges and rewards of reflecting on a field that took decades in the making and to portray the excitement of things to come. We also want to share with each of you how directional changes are part of the process, and when we as a field move forward, natural tensions do occur and working collaboratively can effectively address some complex problems.

When we embarked on this project, we started with a list of disciplines that reflected APSAC's

membership and identified some of the original leaders of APSAC who fit within those disciplines. Very quickly, we ran into problems with this approach. Some leaders' influence spans across disciplines, and to pigeon-hole pioneers in one perspective would be a disservice to our philosophy of breaking down silos. We then enlisted the help of several of the original founders of APSAC, as well as current APSAC members on the Publications Committee, to help identify who else should be included. This process generated a massive list of names that quickly made us realize that this project was going to be much bigger than we had originally planned. (In hindsight, it was rather naïve of us to think that we were going to have a special issue honoring only a handful of those who built APSAC!) As we collected the contact information for the people on the list, someone gave us the idea to include all of the past presidents of APSAC.

We then embarked on parallel processes of contacting the pioneers and presidents to be interviewed and recruiting people to conduct the interviews and write for the special issue. As we contacted the presidents and pioneers, they suggested other people who would be great to include in the special issue. At this point, we easily had from 50 to 75 pioneers and presidents on our list. Not all were able to be contacted, and not all could be scheduled to be interviewed. However, we had more than two dozen who eventually were. The recruitment of authors was initially quite successful, and we had more authors than we had confirmed pioneers and presidents. Rather than turn away qualified authors, we partnered them to work

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together. Then we heard from more of the pioneers and presidents and had to recruit more authors. (It was during this process that we reflected that none of us had any interest in working in air traffic control or a job requiring handling complex logistics!)

Pulling this special issue together has reflected some of the themes that appear across the articles documenting the history of APSAC, contributions of leaders, and ideas for the future direction of APSAC. Like the creation of APSAC, this special issue started with a few passionate people's beliefs that there was a real need joined by their commitment to address it. Of course, creating a special issue is nowhere as large as creating APSAC, but over the last year, this has been an act of love that drew upon many people's strengths (and arguably taxed the weakness of people who willingly stepped up

when needed). Passion drove this project. On more than one occasion, the chaos level made us question what we were doing, and we sometimes did not feel like we had enough resources. A couple of times we faltered. Even though several times we altered our course and timeline to address the needs of interviewees and authors, we never wavered from our commitment to the special issue. We centered the project on innovation by pulling together founders and the next generation of practitioners, scholars, and leaders. As editors, we attempted to mentor those newer in the field. We sought diversity of disciplines and ensured we had authors who were practitioners and new scholars. In creating this special issue, we are proud of what we have accomplished, and we see that there is so much more to be done.



The history of APSAC is rich, filled with inspiring examples of people who have dedicated their lives to helping children and families. The commitment to stop child maltreatment and to promote well-being and healing for children, families, and communities lies in the core of the presidents and pioneers as well as the authors of these articles. The examples of those featured in the two volumes of the special issue are not exhaustive of the influential leaders in the field of child maltreatment; many more could have been included. Similarly, many other people could have authored these papers. There were beautiful interactions between the authors and the interviewees. Genuine connections occurred, and as editors we heard from all parties about how meaningful the process was. We could see this in the articles.

Originally, we planned to divide the articles into two volumes thematically. However, it became apparent that there was tremendous overlap and no clear order. Dividing the contributions into the two special issues was in the end largely driven by logistics (i.e., which ones were ready to be published). Organizing the articles within the issues was another quandary, and in the end, we organized them in a way that they seemed to flow. We also recognize that that they might have flowed just as well if they had been randomly organized.

As editors, we took the opportunity to interview APSAC's current president and the immediate past president as we (maybe a little selfishly) wanted to be part of the process of preserving APSAC's rich history and highlighting its future. In this first volume of the special issue, we present an interview with our current APSAC president, Ernestine Briggs-King, PhD. After we reflect on the interview, we present a brief overview of the rest of this volume.



Current President: Ernestine Briggs-King

Dr. Briggs-King is APSAC's current president and a licensed psychologist with almost 30 years of experience in the fields of child trauma and maltreatment. She

also is Associate Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Network Relations for the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS); Director of Research at the Center for Child & Family Health; and Associate Professor and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University School of Medicine. Reading through Dr. Brigg-King's current roles and responsibilities, one could wonder how she balances everything. Dr. Briggs-King pragmatically explained that all her work is tied together. It centers around childhood trauma and maltreatment and focuses on strategies for intervention. She seeks to bring the best of what is known in terms of interventions to underserved communities of color that often do not get the high-quality services available to other sectors. Her passion is ensuring the translation of research to help children and families.

The work is quite timely, Dr. Briggs-King reflected:

“[Amid] COVID, all the social injustice, [and the] racial reckoning issues that the country has—[these] just kind of made us pause for a minute and really kind of reflect on what are we doing. How are we doing, or could we be doing better? So, all questions I've been asking for a long time, but they are getting a lot more attention.... So, I'm really grateful for the opportunity to bring the different facets of my life together and really bring that into the field.”

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The work that Dr. Briggs-King has dedicated her life to has been instrumental in the current thinking about working with children, families, and communities of color.

Background

Dr. Briggs-King's professional career began as a graduate student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she received her degree in clinical/community psychology. During her master's and dissertation research, she worked on the west and south sides of Chicago in underserved communities of color with high rates of poverty. Her studies examined children who had been sexually abused or exposed to other forms of trauma and explored the role of social support in mitigating high-risk behaviors. She was also concerned about the health disparities and high rates of stress in the community and looked for community-based strategies for solutions.

In looking at disproportionalities in the child welfare system, Dr. Briggs-King took the opportunity to associate with parents to understand the system, to have access to information, and to advocate for their children. She sought to build strong supports for children. At one point, she worked at Hope for the Children, an innovative program simultaneously addressing the multiple needs of children in foster care, older adults, and affordable housing. The intentional community had foster families living alongside older adults who received affordable housing with the expectation that they would serve as "grandparents" to the children in foster care. It is projects like this that inspired Dr. Briggs-King to think that something could be done differently in child welfare and in addressing childhood trauma.

Across her career, Dr. Briggs-King has worked in various settings that afforded her the opportunity to become immersed in different communities. As an intern at the Medical University of South Carolina, she was part of a project that studied service members in the Navy who sexually abused their children. At the National Crime Victims Center, she was able to support women who had children

and were experiencing domestic violence. She said that these contrasting experiences helped her learn more about how best to serve children and families. She also confirmed that the connection to research is paramount. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Briggs-King has been involved with multiple research projects looking at the issues of childhood trauma and maltreatment and has always sought to improve child and family well-being.

Connecting with APSAC

It was during her early clinical and research work that Dr. Briggs-King learned about APSAC and the San Diego conference. She reflected that while attending the conferences and becoming involved with APSAC, she met many of the legends in the child maltreatment field and interacted with people in the APSAC community who were talking about research, culture, and prevention.

For many years, she was the editor of the *APSAC Advisor*. She relished the opportunity that this provided to translate research to "digestible takeaways" for people working directly with children and families. The position required her to stay abreast of the most current research, a practice she also utilized in her service on the editorial board of *Child Maltreatment*, the official journal of APSAC.

Staying connected to research within APSAC and, more broadly, the field of child maltreatment has helped Dr. Briggs-King in her efforts to serve children and families. The advances that she and her colleagues are making through the Center for Child & Family Health have been creating community-based interventions and developing the North Carolina workforce by the integration of research and implementation science. Similarly, she sees that the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is enlarging capacity for children and families who have experienced trauma by ensuring that services and knowledge are readily available. As the NCTSN has grown exponentially over the past twenty years, its pooled expertise has developed resources to address various sources of traumas (e.g.,

natural disasters, pandemics, community violence, and mass shootings). Thus, when these supports are shared across professional networks such as APSAC, they can more easily get into the hands of parents as well as those serving children and families.

Growth for APSAC: What's Next?

Dr. Briggs-King suggested three key areas in which APSAC—and the child maltreatment field and society—should grow: (1) diversity and racial justice, (2) workforce issues across multiple systems connected to child maltreatment, and (3) community engagement and translational research.

First, thinking about diversity and racial justice, she remarked that there is a need to intentionally address disparities and disproportionalities. She said that the knowledge to address child maltreatment spans multiple systems (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, education, law enforcement), thus there is work to be done around equity and justice in each system.

Across multiple systems, problems with workforce retention and worker well-being concern Dr. Briggs-King. She noted that educational, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, and healthcare systems are receiving record numbers of burnout and worker fatigue cases. In part, this is because our society has failed to address many structural issues. A global pandemic coupled with racial reckoning and economic uncertainty have overwhelmed systems, and the frontline workers cannot adequately address the syndemic that we now face. Systems are ill-prepared to address all of the complex needs of children and families, and professionals need adequate resources to continue their work. Efforts must be made to determine how best to build and support a sustainable, effective workforce.

In thinking about the community, Dr. Briggs-King pointed to the need to bring the information from the ivory towers into local arenas. Translational research must be prioritized to make sure that interventions are most effective and help children and families.

There also must be concerted efforts for researchers to truly partner with communities. Throughout the interview, Dr. Briggs-King urged us to listen to and learn from many voices rather than positioning ourselves as the experts.

Considering APSAC's future, she identified the need to be open to adapt to emerging needs. She stressed that policy changes are perceived accurately by asking, "What is the ripple effect?" Using the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* as an example, Dr. Briggs-King talked about the monumental consequences that could follow children being born into families where they are not wanted. Through any policy changes, she suggested, it is important to use a framework that considers the needs of children and their families and to focus on how to help children develop in a healthy, secure, and safe environment.

Advice for Future Leaders

Dr. Briggs-King's advice for future leaders began with her deep gratitude for the pioneers and past presidents of APSAC. The knowledge and skills they shared have contributed to the success of the field as well as her current work, including serving as the president of APSAC. As she looks to the future, she aspires both to share her wisdom and to learn from the next generation of leaders.

It is imperative to get people involved with APSAC earlier in their careers, she believes. Ideally, students will join APSAC to facilitate their professional development. APSAC will also benefit from new ideas that students will bring as they are learning in their graduate programs. Dr. Briggs-King sees a need to further engage professionals who are more seasoned with those newer to the field. Those who are mid-career need to be encouraged to innovate and to collaborate with the younger generations.

Reflecting that the pandemic pushed APSAC to using more technology, Dr. Briggs-King emphasized that using social media and other

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technology is central to APSAC's continued success. New strategies have the potential to reach more populations who have historically been underserved. This messaging along with novel approaches can help to advance the field.

In talking about advice for future leaders, Dr. Briggs-King expressed her excitement for the potential. There is already great work being done, and this can be built upon, she explained. Diversifying the board and membership and engaging new members are important directions to continue. She urges future leaders not to contain their excitement of knowledge and innovation. She concluded by saying that APSAC has evolved over its 35-year history, and unlimited opportunities are available to expand its impact.

Reflection

Due to logistics and scheduling, only one of us (Lisa) could conduct the interview with Dr. Briggs-King. As I hung up the phone at the end of the interview, I sat at my desk looking at more than a dozen pages where I had scribbled notes. I was relieved that Dr. Briggs-King had allowed me to audio record the call; although I had tried to capture all that she shared, I feared I had perhaps missed something. All that she had said felt important. As a qualitative scholar, I am an experienced interviewer, yet rarely have I had such a beautiful interview. Dr. Briggs-King's thorough answers to questions were incredibly organized, and as she spoke, she gave answers to the obvious follow-up questions. Her warmth, passion, and commitment to children and families were evident throughout her responses.

In reflecting on Dr. Briggs-King's interview, what I keep returning to is how visionary her work has been. She was committed to translational research long before it was considered a priority of national funders and a buzzword for scholars. Her original work to ensure that empirically supported interventions are available to Black children, families, and communities happened prior to the more recent conversations about equity and racial disproportionalities and disparities. Dr. Briggs-

King's commitment to help Black parents advocate for their children and navigate (often broken) systems aligns with current practices of engaging and empowering parents and families; yet, when she first started these efforts, they were novel. What she started doing a couple of decades ago has now become recognized as best practice; her work set a foundation that many of us have built upon to serve children, families, and communities. Dr. Briggs-King is the epitome of a great leader.

As the current president of APSAC, Dr. Briggs-King has offered poignant messages for future leaders of APSAC that feel especially apropos. Many of her ideas were raised by other pioneers and presidents as well. In her interview, she revealed a fierce commitment to diversity and equity at all levels in APSAC, from the ranks of our membership to the leadership of the board. Similarly, her thoughts that APSAC needs to embrace technology and innovation were stressed by others. Building relationships—across disciplines and among professionals throughout APSAC—was also a central theme of many of the interviews by our responding pioneers and presidents. The idea of making connections—and bringing together the innovative ideas of new professionals and students with the wisdom of those in mid- and late-career—very much aligns with the vision of the 35th Anniversary Special Issue. We cannot help but hope that Dr. Briggs-King, the pioneers and presidents, and APSAC members who read the special issue are all energized about the future of APSAC.

Introduction to the Special Issue

The articles describing the pioneers and presidents echo the themes within Dr. Briggs-King's interview. Many of the other authors discuss the passion and commitment of pioneers and presidents and observe how they embraced innovation and encourage future leaders of APSAC to continue to do so. A typical editorial introduction is for us to introduce each of the articles and connect all of them through the themes. We developed a spreadsheet and started this process, but we abandoned it as it just did not

feel right. We want APSAC members to read the articles and connect with what they each may take away from the pioneers and presidents as well as the reflections from the authors. These articles are deeply personal, and to summarize them in a couple of sentences feels like it does them an injustice. We hope that you will savor the articles in this special issue written about Jon Conte, Deborah Daro, Roland Summit, Susan Hardie, Kathleen Faller, Charles Wilson, Michael Durfee, Deanne Tilton Durfee, Astrid Heger, Theresa Reid, and Tricia Gardner.

Throughout their reflections, it is clear that the authors were moved by both the monumental contributions and the humility exhibited by those whom they interviewed. In the collection of articles in this volume, authors frequently shared that

they felt privileged to talk with and learn from the “giants” of the field, people whose names and work they had known and studied. We, too, feel fortunate to have learned from the pioneers and presidents as we pored over the manuscripts during the initial stages of submission. We were also energized to have worked with the authors of these papers whose excitement and commitment parallels that of the very “giants” they interviewed. We are excited to recognize the authors, some of those who undoubtedly will build on the work of those who founded and led APSAC: Esaa Samarah, Jerica Knox, Samantha Ellner, Jiwon Helen Wyman, Karen Marcial, Judith Valasquez, Sarah Scozzafava, Jerri Sites, Kristina Taylor Porter, James Simon, and Nicole Kim. We are excited to see where these new voices and leaders, including you, will take APSAC and the field of child maltreatment in the future.

About the Editors of the Special Issue:

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Carlo Panlilio, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education, and a faculty member with the Child Maltreatment Solutions Network at the Pennsylvania State University. He received his PhD in Human Development from the University of Maryland, College Park, with a specialization in Developmental Science and a Certificate in Education Measurement, Statistics, and Evaluation. He was a former Doris Duke Fellow for the Promotion of Child Well-being. His program of research focuses on the dynamic interplay between maltreatment, context, and development and how these processes influence individual differences in learning across the lifespan. His research is guided by an interdisciplinary approach to examine the multisystemic influences of early adversity on self-regulatory processes that explain variability in the academic outcomes of children with a history of maltreatment. He has published several journal articles and chapters and was editor of *Trauma-Informed Schools: Integrating Child Maltreatment Prevention, Detection, and Intervention*. He previously worked as a licensed clinical marriage and family therapist in private practice, community agencies, treatment foster care, and a residential treatment facility for adolescents.

Amanda M. Ferrara, PhD, is Multi-Modal Research Project Manager at the Survey Research Center at The Pennsylvania State University. She earned her PhD in educational psychology from The Pennsylvania State University, with a minor in applied statistics. Her program of research focuses on unpacking the effects of traumatic experiences and childhood maltreatment on individual and family well-being, self-regulation, and learning. Specifically, her prior work has focused on the effects of symptoms of trauma on students' self-regulated learning and metacognitive monitoring, and evaluating programs designed to decrease child maltreatment.