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## **Families, Relationships and Societies: An introduction from the new Editorial team**

Launched by Tess Ridge and Brid Featherstone in 2012, *Families Relationships and Societies (FRS)*, was a unique new interdisciplinary social science journal seeking to ‘stimulate and inform’ scholarship and debates about ‘the fluidity, complexity and diversity of contemporary social and personal relationships ... across the life course and historical time and geo-political and virtual spaces’ (Ridge and Featherstone, 2012: 3). More than a decade on, the ongoing breadth, depth and quality of submissions *FRS* continues to receive, is evidence that the original ambition is certainly being delivered on. As we assume editorship of the journal, we extend our deep appreciation to the outgoing editorial team - Esther Dermott, as Editor-in-Chief, and Sara Elden, Manik Deepak-Gopinath, Isabella Crespi and Jason Ran as Co-Editors. Their leadership and dedication have advanced the journal's aims and ambitions, and expanded its scholarly contribution, international reach, and engagement with societal and political issues. We further extend our appreciation to the much larger collective of former and continuing editors whose vision, leadership and service have fuelled the growth, development and significance of *FRS*. We, of course, extend our appreciation to all *FRS* authors, reviewers and the Bristol University Press publishing team.

Through the myriad contributions made by many over the last 13 years, *FRS* can confidently lay claim to being an innovative and vibrant forum in the social sciences. *FRS* is distinctive in its promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship that critically unpicks what it means to be *related* – whether through kith, kin, friendship, work, networks of care, imagination or memory. Following David Morgan’s (1996, 2011) approach to family practices we celebrate this emphasis on *doing, creating, imagining* and *experiencing* relationships without taking these ties for granted or seeking to ‘pin them down’ or reify them. This ethos has defined the journal’s special approach to the field, pushing the boundaries of interdisciplinary family studies through an ontological curiosity about the meaning of relationships - we are thrilled to continue celebrating this orientation through the annual David Morgan prize. As we commence our editorship, we aim to sustain and build upon these strong foundations, while bringing a fresh emphasis on the ways families, relationships and societies are actively practised, enacted and ‘done’ as relational accomplishments. *FRS* brings together a range of social science and sociological perspectives concerning families and family life, relationships and relationality, as they play out in the context of different societies and cultures. Our abiding goal is to reinvigorate this unique and significant interdisciplinary perspective while deepening *FRS*’s vibrant engagement with theoretical advancements, methodological innovations, and policy and practice debates.

Our commitment to exploring the radical interplay between relational processes and broader societal circumstances is particularly vital in the current global context. The world faces multiple crises; from increasingly grave threats to the environment, to wars and the rise of far right and populist politics around the globe (Henig and Knight, 2023). While these issues unfold on the world stage, it has never been more important to attend to our most personal relationships and how lives are lived through, and in spite of, such times. This journal has always been a place where social scientists have explored the relational implications of societies’ ‘big’ issues. We have seen this particularly in the

Special Issues which over the years have nurtured debates on salient and diverse topics: growing up in transnational families, the effects of technologies on family life, violence against women and children in diverse contexts, and environmental challenges, particularly climate disaster. *FRS* continues to be an important space where social scientists pose vital empirical questions about how our relationships are affected by social changes, shocks and crises. In our role as editors we reaffirm our focus on the practice of relationships as central to comprehending social life in these challenging contexts. We continue to welcome important articles about changing parenting patterns, networks of care and migration and the meanings of home and relational belonging in challenging times. We see this orientation among the articles included in the current Issue, our first as editors, which include exciting empirical approaches to parenting (Ranta et al; Tarrant), couple relationships (Schmitz and Trubner; Carter and Hayfield) and relational challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic (Marionneau et al), as well as original theoretical approaches to concepts of forgiveness (Abbott) and experiences of bereavement (Towers).

In addressing these multifaceted issues, a critical interdisciplinarity is at the heart of *FRS*'s scholarly identity. Questions of relationships and relationality are approached from a variety of perspectives including sociology, social policy, geography, social work, social psychology, disability studies, criminology and more. The disciplinary breadth of the journal enables an agility in responding to the key and pressing issues in our field. *FRS* is a meaningful home for a multitude of perspectives, tied together by a commitment to critically interrogate what it means to be related in ever-shifting social circumstances. Such variety nurtures an exciting epistemological diversity in how we can know and understand relationships. We value methodological approaches that attend to the active and processual nature of relationships, whether they are qualitative, quantitative, established or innovative. *FRS* has always been a place of methodological inventiveness with many authors employing what Back and Puwar (2012) describe as 'live methods' that are engaged, attentive, 'artful and crafty' (ibid: 9), able to explore the nuance, diversity and complexity of doing relationships. This stance also acknowledges how the doing of research is itself engaged in the construction and shaping of social worlds. Our authors are leading the way in applying reflexive, ethical and politically astute approaches that recognise how research practices and relational practices are inherently intertwined.

Beyond this interdisciplinary and methodological diversity, the international scope of *FRS* becomes even more crucial in the context of our current times. While relationships are practised differently across cultures and societies, there are clearly shared, macro challenges. As such, we follow Gurminder Bhambra in advocating for 'connected sociologies', opening up opportunities for "reconsidering what we previously thought we had known" (Bhambra, 2014: 4). A commitment to *being* international has been core to the journal from the outset. As expanded upon by the authors of the Editorial written to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *FRS*, this has entailed 'engaging with issues, scholarship and debates pertinent to different regions and countries across the globe; promoting comparisons and dialogues across these, and engaging with the significance of the international and transnational dimensions and complexities of social identities, relationships and practices' (Churchill, Dermott and Miller, 2023: 4). We also approach

‘internationalisation’ as a practice; something that we will *do* as well as something that we can *be*. This process of *doing* internationalisation means challenging inequalities in knowledge production by including the less-heard voices of scholars within the so-called ‘Global South’. To this end, we will strive to develop meaningful understandings of the barriers faced by researchers in various international contexts, working to support their submissions and increase readership.

A key feature of FRS has been a commitment to ensuring that this critical international interdisciplinarity speaks to the ways in which social policy and social provision intersect with family life, personal life, care, welfare and intergenerational relations across various contexts. FRS continues to be a space where impactful critical social policy is done. Many journal contributions have sought to challenge elite and ideological positions that promote and privilege rigid, narrow or oppressive agendas and approaches to understanding and ordering personal and family life and relationships. Recent contributions have explored how adoption laws favour specific constructions of ‘family’ and ‘childhood’ (Pilcher and Coffey, 2024), the detrimental effects of austerity on marginalised communities (Boddy, 2023), and the role of the state in the intensification of family and parental duties informed by particular normative frames (Wood and Bennett, 2023; Sadıkoğlu and Erdoğan Coşkun (2024). This practice of doing impactful research is most clearly demonstrated in FRS’s promotion and development of novel approaches to generating and presenting evidence for policy and practice. Recent journal editions have considered policy learning that draws on research about children’s experiences of growing up in transnational families (Schwittek, König and Ducu, 2025), and the use of participatory and qualitative longitudinal research methods as tools to foster collaborative policy learning environments (Tarrant, 2023). We aim to further develop *FRS* as a significant platform for critical, impactful, and innovative scholarship that promotes dialogue between research, policy and practice communities for progressive social policy and more equitable social relations.

Across these core missions for *FRS*, the journal’s Open Space section is distinctive and valuable. Now incorporated within a Special Issue thematic, we aim to build on prior developments to grow the Open Space section as a space for diverse voices to engage in broad and significant debates within and beyond the academy; and as a unique platform for cultivating interdisciplinary and multi-method perspectives that engage with pressing social issues and challenges. We aim to develop the role of the Open Space section to enhance the scope and contribution of the journal across communities and disciplines.

Finally, we are excited to take the baton from the previous team and continue the journal's successful trajectory by enacting our vision. The achievements of our predecessors will support this roadmap and we ask you, as future contributors and reviewers, to support us in publishing world leading interdisciplinary scholarship that offers unique relational insights and responses to global contemporary challenges.

Dr Harriet Churchill (Co-Editor in Chief)

Dr Katherine Davies (Co-Editor in Chief)

Professor Majella Kilkey (Co-Editor in Chief)

Professor Sundari Anitha (Co-Editor)

Dr Adam Carter (Co-Editor)

Dr Julie Walsh (Co-Editor)

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