

Editorial

The readers of the *Journal* may not be aware that the Joint Editors act independently in making decisions on accepting papers for publication. This means that as an Editor I am just as intrigued as any other reader when I see a new issue of the *Journal* since it is likely that I will have been responsible for selecting only one third of the papers in that issue. In reading the material in this present issue I was struck by the conceptual and methodological links between a sub-set of papers that were concerned with adverse events and circumstances and their long-term sequelae; moreover, that these papers had between them some important implications for clinical practice. The first of these papers is by Dunn et al. and investigates the transmission within families of qualities of relationships. They found that father–child and mother–child relationships in stepfamilies, single-parent, and non-stepfamilies were found to be related to a number of factors. These included the parents' own earlier life course experiences, current family circumstances, and how a partner and child were getting along. The links with life course experiences meant that children were at risk of a “double dose” of less affectionate relationships in families in which parents had experienced early adversities. They found evidence for both selection effects (similarities in the early experience of both partners) and co-parenting effects (effects of one parent's relationship with a child on the other parent) and effects of biological relatedness.

The study by Dunn et al. concerns the mechanisms underlying chronic adversity in the experiences within families of young children. In contrast, the paper by Udwin et al. concerns the impact of a specific acute and unexpected event on children's longer-term psychological functioning. They examined risk factors associated with the development of long-term psychological difficulties in a group of adolescent survivors of a shipping disaster. The paper provides insight into the prognosis, mechanisms, and continuities of child psychopathology in later life. The findings will assist in the early identification of survivors who are at high risk of psychological and psychiatric difficulties, in the expectation that they can be given swift access to psychological interventions and then monitored over time. One basis for such intervention is to work on aspects of information processing bias that might result from such a stress. The paper by Dalglish et al. investigates some of the possible underlying psychological mechanisms that might result in changes to a child's expectation of emotional events as a result of the experience of trauma. The negative results found in this particular study show the counteracting affects of both inhibitory processors and ones that increase the availability of cues for such events.

Another stress from outside the family, but in this case an often chronic stress, is that arising in relation to bullying. Most research to date on bullying has just considered bullies or victims of direct physical bullying. In a study of an impressively large sample of children, Wolke et al. reported that a substantial number of primary school children involved in bullying became victims at other times i.e., were bully/victims. In addition,

relational bullying, i.e., bullying concerned with exclusion of another child from a social group, was widespread. The bully/victims and those involved in both types of bullying, direct and relational, had the highest rates of externalising problems. It is notable that pure relational bullies had the lowest rates of behavioural problems but were also the least prosocial. These purely relational bullies were “cool manipulators” with a good understanding of social situations.

There are a group of papers concerned with very early events in infancy and their later developmental and psychological consequences. The study by Boddy et al. examines the physical and psychological development of a group of 6-year-old children who had failed to thrive during the first year of life and a matched group of children who grew normally in infancy. The need to consider feeding practices and intervention with failure to thrive is born out by the observation that the case group children were considerably shorter and thinner than comparisons at 6 years. Over 20% of the cases were below the tenth centile for height and weight. By contrast, there was little evidence of long-term cognitive disadvantages. Infant growth faltering was not related to later cognitive abilities. Case group children performed worse than comparisons on tests of numeracy and memory skills but these differences were small and not likely to be clinically significant. Arguably, the adverse effects of growth faltering of cognitive development diminish over time.

Since the inception of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) there has been a concern that parental anxiety about their offspring may impact negatively on child adjustment. The study by Gibson et al. is part of a longitudinal project and identifies certain adverse outcomes in IVF children. There was a higher incidence of perinatal and neonatal risk, IVF mothers reported more anxiety over baby wellbeing, and the infants were reported as showing more difficult temperament than those of control mothers. However, the level of anxiety and infant difficulty was not extreme. For example, the ratings of infant temperament were in the normal range when compared to a large normative sample. Anxiety and temperament ratings were not negatively related to the mother–child relationship as indicated by attachment and mother–child interaction. It is concluded, therefore, that although it is important to acknowledge the concerns of IVF parents, professionals can be reassured that the outcomes for these families are positive overall.

The paper by Stams et al. looks at the later development of children who were adopted in infancy by parents in The Netherlands. These adoptions were both international, in that the country of origin was from outside The Netherlands, and transracial, in that the adoptive parents were white Caucasians and the biological parents were from Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Columbia. It was found that at 7 years the adopted children showed a relatively high rate of parent-reported problem behaviour. In contrast, the children's behaviour at school was more favourable. In addition, their academic perfor-

mance was in the normal range and their intelligence was above average. The authors conclude that the high rate of parent-reported behaviour problems might be explained by a number of risk factors. These include the child's genetic background, the pre-adoption care that had been received, and the child's growing understanding of adoption during middle childhood. It is suggested that the relatively good outcome as far as school attainment was concerned is a reflection of compensatory factors. Adoptive parents may offer their children sufficient or more than average cognitive stimulation and encouragement and this may act protectively to maintain levels of school attainment.

The next issue of the *JCPP* will show some changes to the Editorial team. The Corresponding Editors from Europe (Martin Schmidt and Joseph Sergeant) have come to the end of their term of office. With the appointment of Frank Verhulst from the Netherlands as one of the Joint Editors, it has been decided that the role of the European Corresponding Editors has been superseded and they will not be replaced. It is also time for Margot Prior to step down as Corresponding Editor from Australasia and she will be replaced by David Fergusson

from New Zealand. The Joint Editors are extremely grateful to Martin, Joseph, and Margot for the work they have put in on behalf of the *Journal* to solicit and process papers from their respective parts of the world. The *Journal* prides itself on being a genuinely international, and not just a U.K.-based, outlet for high-quality research. The work of the Corresponding Editors has a key part in maintaining this international perspective.

The end of the year 2000 is also the time when David Skuse retires as the senior Joint Editor. Over the 9 years that David has been an Editor the *Journal* has grown both in size and in its impact. David has made an outstanding contribution to this development. We would like to thank him for his efforts in maintaining the scientific quality of the papers published in the *Journal* and to wish him well in the new initiatives that he can now undertake with the time he will have free from *Journal* commitments! David is being replaced by Francesca Happé from the Institute of Psychiatry, London. As well as thanking the departing Editors, I would like to welcome Francesca and David Fergusson, who I know will become highly valued members of the Editorial team.

Jim Stevenson