1984-85 Child Care & Development Group (formerly Medical Psychology Unit)

(Department of Paediatrics and Social & Political Sciences Committee)

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The work of the Group is mainly concerned with research on child development, with particular emphasis on the growth and influence of parent-child relationships and the effect of medical practice on children and parents. Members of the Group teach for various departments in the University, including Social and Political Sciences, Experimental Psychology, the Medical Sciences Tripos and the Department of Paediatrics.

The library of the Institute of Child Psychology is now housed in our premises. This came to us together with the Margaret Lowenfeld Fellowship, held by Dr. Catherine Urwin, through the Lowenfeld Trustees. We also have been given some archival material relating to Dr. Lowenfeld and the Institute of Child Psychology. Anybody wishing to consult this should contact Dr Urwin. Sally Roberts is our Honorary Librarian. The library also houses books given by Professor Harry Highkin following the death of his wife Elspeth, who was a research student in the Group at the time of her death.

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Barbara Antonis has been working on the development of the children in the longitudinal study and completing a project (begun by J.F. Sauzier) on first pregnancies and the early months of parenthood. She also works part-time in a psychiatric day clinic for adults.

Frances Barnes is engaged on a study of 3 year old children - focusing on patterns of communication in the family. Work continues on the relationships between pregnancy factors, the children's status at birth and their later development, including handedness. She plans to spend much of the year in Australia.

Jill Brown - Secretary for the Group.

Les Goldmann (third year research student) is researching the psychological aspects of anaesthesia and surgery. He is particularly interested in the question of awareness under anaesthesia and the preoperative psychological preparation of patients.

Josephine Green, Vanessa Coupland, Jenny Kitzinger are starting a study of maternity services in a number of local hospitals under a grant from The Health Promotion Research Trust. The co-investigators on this grant are John Hare (Consultant Obstetrician, Huntingdon), Rhys Williams (Specialist in Community Medicine) and Martin Richards.

Brigitte Niestroj is investigating mothers and the mother-child relationship in European modern history, concentrating on England and Germany. She has also worked on mothers and newborns in Botswana and Natal.

Shirley Prendergast and Alan Prout are coming to the end of a three year study of parenthood classes in a small number of secondary schools. Using intensive data collection methods the intention is to produce a number of case studies of what occurs in classrooms which will illuminate the educative process at this level. The research is funded by the Health Education Council. Future research and developmental work is planned.
Frances Price is engaged on preliminary planning and a pilot study for a national survey of triplets and high order births. This survey will cover obstetric, paediatric, social and psychological aspects of families with multiple births and is being carried out in collaboration with researchers in several other institutions including OPCS.

Janet Reibstein is working on the effects on adolescents of parental affairs. Her field of specialization is adolescence and the family, and past research has included a study of adolescent mothers.

Martin Richards main interests are in the effects of marital separation on children and the intended and unintended consequences for children and their parents of perinatal medicine. Current research projects include studies of night waking in infants, maternity services in local hospitals and a national survey of triplets and higher order multiple births.

Sally Roberts - Assistant Secretary, Unit Librarian and Computer Representative.

Gordon Scott is investigating night waking in infants under a grant from The Health Promotion Trust. He is evaluating the effects of offering support, advice and information to parents of infants under a year who are regarded as having a night waking problem by means of a randomised controlled trial.

Deborah Thom will be starting an historical study of child guidance clinics and school psychology services in England and Wales under an ESRC project grant.

Nicola Totterman (first year research student supported by an ESRC link award) is studying the effect of irregular husband-father absence on the family with particular reference to Naval families.

Cathy Urwin (Margaret Lowenfeld Research Fellow) is carrying out a small-scale intensive study of the development of relationships between same-aged infants. She is also working on the application of psychoanalytic theory and other clinical approaches to the empirical study of parent-child interaction, and on the relationship between developmental psychology and child rearing practices.

Selected publications


Prendergast, S. (with Brown, P., MacIntyre, M., Morpeth, R.) A daughter, a thing to be given away. 'Women in Society', Virago 1981.

(see also Davis, J., Prendergast, S., Prout, A.)


Richards, M.P.M. How should we approach the study of fathers? In M. O'Brien and L. McKee (eds.) 'The Father Figure'. Tavistock, 1982.


