

Introduction

This issue is divided into two parts: one devoted to review some aspects of child psychological maltreatment, and another to introduce some lines of research in various Mediterranean countries.

As for the former, we asked our colleague James Garbarino for a contribution. He agreed to update for our journal his views after the most recent research results. James Garbarino is very well-known for his books and articles on a wide range of aspects related to child abuse and neglect, from psychosocial, ecosystemical and developmental perspectives. In 1986 he and other authors (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley) proposed the five categories of psychological maltreatment to children that have been quoted most frequently in the literature. However, one of his most outstanding points of view, in the last decade, has probably been his insistence on the central position of psychological maltreatment in most 'other' forms of maltreatment. In the article we are presenting in this issue, the link between his considerations on psychological maltreatment and the family welfare system leads us to a set of major professional challenges.

The second article, by our colleagues of Granada University, establishes a link between the first and the second objective of this issue. J. Cantón and M.R. Cortés present a study in which the correlation between different types of child maltreatment and aggressive and withdrawn behavior are tested. The results obtained from a sample of children placed in residential care in the province of Jaén (Autonomous Community of Andalucía, Spain) due to maltreatment seem to confirm that psychological maltreatment is the core construct and a key towards understanding the dynamics of many situations in which maltreatment occurs.

For various reasons, language being an important one, studies on abuse and neglect in the Mediterranean countries are not very well known in the more northern areas of Europe or in the Anglo-Saxon world. It is certainly true that the production is of relatively minor importance, quantitatively speaking, since these countries usually lack substantial budgets for research in the child/family welfare arena. Nevertheless, it is also true that there are some

highly qualified research teams producing high-quality studies. We decided, therefore, that it is worth making a particular effort to introduce our readers to some of the areas of research these 'geographically peripheral' colleagues are working in and to collect some of their articles in English.

The selection presented in this issue is not intended to be representative of all the teams or even of the best ones. We are aware of the existence of other teams and other research areas being investigated, and we hope to be able to introduce them to our readers in the near future.

In this issue we present recent studies carried out by different teams working in three different countries: Greece, Israel and Spain. The common characteristic of these articles is that they are all concerned with highly applied research.

In Greece, the Institute of Child Health has earned a world-wide reputation in its field. Two of its members, Irene Fereti and Metaxia Stavriana, present a study in which they tried to identify some of the basic aspects related to the high incidence (65.5% in their sample) of physical punishment of children in Greece. They discuss the current controversy on the influence of socio-economic status in physical punishment, pointing to the need to devote more attention to attitudes and beliefs in the parents' educational practices.

In Israel, the Center for Children and Youth is known for its efforts to develop major research programmes and disseminate information on the domestic situation of children. Talal Dolev and Dori Rivkin present a number of relevant characteristics of the Israeli protection system for children. Their results underline the significance of the discrepancy between the children's and the families' needs and the nature of the services currently being provided.

Last but not least we introduce the research team at Valencia University, well-known for its community orientation, its publications on social support and networking and for some comparative studies of Latin-American countries. Enrique Gracia and Gonzalo Musitu present a very well-structured psychosocial research in which they analyze social support available to 344 families, in terms of community integration and satisfaction, membership in voluntary organizations and community participation, and utilization of community resources of social support. The results seem to confirm that certain aspects of family behavior and practices can be altered and improved by processes of social support: access to positive networks of social resources and social integration contributes to the adjustment and well-being of families and individuals. For that reason, the authors conclude that social support should become a key ingredient in family intervention programs.