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## 2020 JRIP Editorial:

# Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society for Reproductive & Infant Psychology

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The Society for Reproductive & Infant Psychology (SRIP) was set up in 1980 in recognition that reproduction is a complex, challenging and multifaceted area which is of social, scientific and medical concern. As such, SRIP raises awareness of the importance of psychological, socio-cultural and political aspects of reproduction, birth and infancy. These non-biological aspects of reproduction are often neglected or dispersed in the research literature so there was a genuine need for a multidisciplinary society which remains today. The Society's journal, the Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, was launched in 1983 and in the very first editorial, Christopher Macy envisaged SRIP as being a place of cross-fertilisation, a forum to bring together people from clinical and academic, medical and psychological/behavioural and social backgrounds to foster psychological science and inform contemporary clinical practice. The Journal has epitomised this approach and in its 40<sup>th</sup> year we reflect on how research published in the Journal has developed – both in terms of changing and consistent themes – as well as how SRIP has grown.

Papers across the last decades provide insight into the integral role of SRIP and the Journal in developing the field of psychosocial aspects of reproduction, identifying gaps in research to informing policy and practice. Topics addressed by papers in the early years of publication included psychosocial aspects of childbirth, postnatal depression, infertility, breast-feeding, attachment, preterm birth and infants. These areas have continued to attract the attention of clinicians and researchers from a range of backgrounds over the lifespan of the Journal.

A few thematic shifts in emphasis are evident, which are probably based on a combination of academic research, clinical observations and need for intervention and change. From 2000 we see the emergence of a body of papers focussed on women's experiences of maternity services, their psychological wellbeing and mental health, and the role of practitioners in that context. The notion of 'screening' (or assessment) for depression in pregnancy was first mooted in the Journal in 2002

and in the following years research highlighted the importance of looking at other constructs, such as maternal anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. There was increasing consideration of how perinatal mental health assessment and intervention might be introduced in healthcare practice, including consideration of how to broaden the assessment of psychological health beyond the assessment of depression. The first UK NICE guidance for antenatal and postnatal mental health was developed at this time and papers published in the Journal were cited in these guidelines, suggesting the Journal played a role in early clinical guidance as well as the policy agenda. Other themes that emerged are the need to identify key psychological variables to support the notion of psychological health as a multi-dimensional construct; gaining understanding of the needs of women and men at this time to develop appropriate interventions, including more recently internet and virtual interventions.

There are also noticeably consistent themes that have endured over time, many of which reflect the values of SRIP as a multidisciplinary and inclusive society. The Society and Journal have never shied away from raising or publishing papers on sensitive topics on the boundaries of psychology and politics. For example, cross disciplinary work on medically assisted reproduction and surrogacy has featured in the Journal for many years, bringing the critical eye of research and scholarship to an area characterised by polarised media debate. The Journal was one of the first to publish research on prenatal screening, diagnosis and termination for fetal anomaly and the impact of screening from the perspective of women and families of disabled children. This research has contributed to significant change in the way women receive information about prenatal screening.

Other consistent themes include psychosocial research in relation to abortion, fathers and non-traditional families, such as same-sex couples, which continue to be at the centre of reproductive politics. These are all important areas in which our members and Journal contributors provide much needed balance and high-quality evidence to inform policy and practice. The perspectives of women, men and healthcare professionals are all represented here, demonstrating the distinct inclusive approach of SRIP and the Journal with a multidisciplinary academic and clinical focus.

Since its inception SRIP has grown in number and reach to influence and impact on the reproductive health agenda. More recently, papers in the Journal reflect changing sociocultural values and practices as well as awareness of the global context. For example, there have been papers on gendered aspects of sexual identity and the effects of prenatal exposure to pollution and migration on perinatal wellbeing. There have been milestones along the way that have helped with this, involving commercial publishers, increasing the number of issues to five per year and the Journal being indexed by key online databases such as Medline. These developments mean researchers and

clinicians can easily search and access papers online, which has resulted in increased distribution and reach of the Journal and research.

The Journal also makes an important contribution to knowledge through its publication of guest-edited special issues focusing on a single topic. Examples include PTSD following childbirth (Ayers, McKenzie-McHarg & Slade, 2015), psychological health in the perinatal period (Alderdice et al, 2013) and cross-national comparisons of psychosocial aspects of childbirth (Green, 2008). Many of these special issues arose from developmental workshops funded by SRIP that enable researchers to meet and discuss the state of the art in a particular field of research.

SRIP is an inclusive, scholarly and influential society and the Journal is a significant part of this. SRIP holds conferences and meetings where people from different backgrounds and stages of their career can network and share knowledge from research and clinical practice. These meetings have a reputation for being friendly, multidisciplinary and supportive of early career researchers. They are increasingly international with the conference attracting speakers and delegates from the UK, Europe, America, Australia and Asia. Annual awards are made for outstanding contributions to research (the SRIP Lecturer Award), as well as the best undergraduate, masters and doctoral student theses in this area to recognise and encourage established and future leaders in this field. Workshops and bursaries for clinicians and early career researchers are provided by SRIP to help develop the field and translate research into practice.

Since its inception the development of SRIP and the Journal has been aided by the leadership of many people as Chair of SRIP (ourselves included), SRIP Committee members, and Journal editors (Macy, Stratton, Elliott, Messer, Walker, Zeedyk, Gannon, Van den Akker, Redshaw, Alderdice), as well as the members of SRIP, contributors to the Journal, and people who attend SRIP conferences. The Journal has enabled SRIP to achieve its fundamental aim to develop the fields of reproductive and infant psychology and translate evidence into practice. We hope that SRIP and the Journal will play an even greater role in reproductive science and healthcare in future.

### **Note**

For information on SRIP membership, conferences, prizes and funding see [www.srip.org](http://www.srip.org)

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