

15 The future of the Australian Temperament Project



It is always hard to predict the future. Where the Australian Temperament Project study will go will depend on funding and, of course, on the continued participation of our families who have supported us so magnificently up to now. As our teenagers move into their adult years, we have an exciting opportunity to observe how they adapt to life as workers, partners, parents, and citizens.

One recent development has been the inclusion of the Australian Institute of Family Studies as a collaborating group in the study. For the last 15 years, the Institute has been at the forefront of research on a wide range of issues relating to families. Its involvement is particularly valuable because its expertise is very relevant to the issues we will want to address in the future.

Some of these are:

- How do our young people handle the challenge of choosing and following an occupation or tertiary education? How is this related to their temperament and earlier developmental history?
- What helps some young people overcome earlier difficulties such as anti-social behaviour, depression, anxiety, drug use, etc. as they move into adulthood? What factors lead to the persistence or development of difficulties?
- How does an individual's developmental history over childhood and adolescence, especially their temperament, relate to the ways in which they go about forming intimate relationships in early adulthood?
- What are the characteristics in an individual's development which contribute to a healthy and satisfying role in adult society?

In the long term, as our young adults begin to have families of their own, we will also be able to address questions relating to adult development and family formation in the next generation. For example:

- How much similarity is there between the offspring's temperament and that of their mother or father?
- Does temperament influence an individual's parenting behaviour?
- How similar are the parenting practices of young parents to those of their own parents?

We hope, therefore, to continue following our project teenagers at least into their twenties, although we may be in contact a little less frequently than up till now. We would particularly hope to touch base at important milestones such as 21 and 25 years of age. As the Australian Temperament Project continues into the future, it will become an even more famous landmark study of the development of Australian children.