This fourth volume of the *International Journal of Transitions in Childhood* has a strong focus on transitions in early childhood and relationships. Of interest are two papers addressing transitions within particular educational services: one within an early childhood setting; and the other between two different types of secondary schooling in Germany. Again, this volume has a practitioner article explaining the extensive transition program which illustrates the comprehensive work by community groups to school transitions.

The first paper by Anders Garpelin and his colleagues from Sweden presents the perspectives of teachers from two preschools about the organisation and approaches to children’s transitions from one age group to another age group within each setting. Using the work of van Gennep (1960/1908) and his notion of ‘les rites de passage’ along with the idea of Turner (1969, 1982) of transition being a liminal phase that is best shared with others, Garpelin and colleagues challenge the notion of ‘smooth’ transitions. They contend that transitions are characterised by difference that should not necessarily be ‘smoothed over’ but rather embraced and celebrated by all involved. The narrative descriptions illuminate the differences between the ways that transition is approached and provide strong support for the importance of relationships during the transition periods.

The paper by Amber Jackson and Jennifer Cartmel compliments the importance of interpersonal relationships posited by Garpelin and colleagues. Jackson and Cartmel investigated the views of a small number of children about their experiences of starting Year One in a school in a socio-culturally disadvantaged area in Queensland, Australia. Friendship and knowing other children was a strong emerging theme that appeared to support children during their transition; while being alone or not having friends was a source of worry and stress. Having friends and being liked by others supported ‘children’s enjoyment and involvement in school … contributing to their positive and successful schooling experience’. The authors contend that friendships provided opportunities for enhancing children’s social, emotional and communication skills and contributed to children having insight and understanding into the experiences of others. The importance of friendships (existing and new) being supported in the early years of schooling emerges strongly from this study, as does the importance of interactions and connections for all involved: children, parents and school educators.

Frank Puschner from Germany reports on a relatively new area within the transition research field: the transition from the highest level of secondary education (secondary school) to the middle level (secondary modern). His large two-phase study of students who had transferred to secondary modern and those who had been in secondary modern since primary school is predicated on the notion that for students who make this transition, the experience is generally positive. Over the two phases of the study, findings highlighted that student academic results improved, they reported being happy and excited to leave secondary and be part of the new school environment, and their overall self-efficacy increased, while this tended not to be the case with students who had commenced secondary education at this level. In contrast to the findings of Jackson and Cartmel, this study found no influence of peer relationships on students social adjustment. As with the work of Garpelin and colleagues, this paper adds strength to the notion that transition and change can and should be approached from a positivist perspective.
Again, the theme of relationships and connections underpins the paper by Michele Binstadt from Queensland, Australia. She reports on an innovative collaborative project by two key agencies to provide support for children and their families in a culturally diverse region where the families typically experience high levels of social adversity. Binstadt explains the comprehensive programs and resources that have been implemented including those that support children’s language and literacy and an example of how the program is implemented in a local primary school is given. The importance of a coordinated, partnership approach with regular evaluation and connection with the local community is highlighted.

The papers in this volume highlight the importance of building on existing research to raise important issues and contribute to the conceptualising of children’s transition to school.