



**SUSAN FOOKS**

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## Parent education

The references described in these columns cover a variety of aspects of parent education that have been added to the Australian Institute of Family Studies *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* database over the last two years. In particular this bibliography provides a selection of materials dealing with parenting after marital separation, parenting education for children with special needs, cultural issues in parenting, and general aspects of parenting.

These references are available on interlibrary loan from the Institute's Family Information Centre. A number of the articles and papers are also available in full text on the Internet, with online addresses provided. Others are available from bookshops and libraries.



**Parenting**

**Alexander, R. & Feeney, J. (2000), 'The transition to parenthood: some early findings', University of Queensland Family Centre Newsletter, no. 1, March, pp. 6-7, and Online: <http://www2.psy.uq.edu.au/family/News1-2000.html>.**

It has been acknowledged that the transition to parenthood is generally a stressful process which makes substantial demands on couples. For some it is a time associated with somewhat of a decline in marital satisfaction, while for others, it has been shown to be a time where satisfaction levels remain the same or are actually increased. The study discussed in this article seeks to identify those factors which either help or hinder spouses as they make the transition to parenthood, and reports on adult attachment style measured during pregnancy and coping strategies measured four to six weeks after the birth of a child.

**Burnard, D. (2000), 'John Howard's new family policy: visionary or recycled?', *Relatewell*, vol. 4, no. 2, June, pp. 3-4.**

It is the belief of the Family Relationships Institute that there should be better quality welfare and policies developed to change the Australian culture with regards to relationships. There is a need for policy which promotes a culture that is socially responsible and psychologically mature and which enhances relationship skills. The policy needs to promote a recognition that although the desire to relate is innate, the ability to relate well is learned. The question raised in this article is whether the government's social program to enable relationship support services will be translated into quality of life programs promoting harmonious family life and positive parenting or just another welfare program.

**'I want to be a good parent' (2000), *Relatewell*, vol. 4, no. 2, June, pp. 8-9.**

There are several principles that underpin good parenting. This article outlines those principles which are based on the concepts of positive parenting, and include values such as encouraging respect for self and others, listening to children, avoiding commercial exploitation, practising tolerance, and being authentic.

**Edgar, D. (2000), 'Families and social reconstruction of marriage and parenthood in Australia', in Weeks, W. & Quinn, M. (eds) *Issues Facing Australian Families: Human Services Respond*, 3rd edn, Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest, NSW, pp. 19-31.**

Varied attitudes to the concept and role of family in society are addressed in this chapter. The author suggests that the family, with its central processes of marital and parenting relationships, is better viewed as being both public and private, both social and individual, both institutional and personal, and macro and micro at the same

time. Presenting statistics and research findings, the author proposes that the shift towards normative individualism which may liberate women in certain ways, may bring them into even greater class subjugation than before. Among the issues examined are the diversity of Australian family life, the historical context of marriage and parenthood, institutional legitimations of change, and the welfare state and family relations.



**Parenting after marital separation**

**Dickenson, J., Heyworth, C., Plunkett, D. & Wilson, K. (1999), 'Sharing the care of children post-separation: family dynamics and labour force capacity', Paper presented at the Family Strengths Conference, University of Newcastle, NSW, November, 35p, and Online: <http://www.facs.gov.au/> (select Publications, scroll to Families and Children).**

New data on the circumstances of income support for parents who share the care of their children on a substantially equal basis post-separation are presented in this paper. The paper explores the different patterns of shared care arrangements, the extent of flexibility in the arrangements, and factors that impact on the arrangements in the context of the labour force capacity of the parents. The analysis in the paper is based on telephone interviews conducted in July 1999 and involves 458 shared care parents.

**Moloney, L. (2000), 'Child-focused parenting after separation: socio-legal developments and challenges', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, vol. 21, no. 2, June, pp. 61-72.**

In this article the author uses developing ideas in family law as a backdrop against which to

discuss changing assumptions about parenting. In particular, he examines the gender-neutral assumptions within family law in Australia and elsewhere in the light of seemingly contradictory evidence about the value of post-separation fathering. That men were equally capable of providing effective parenting was by no means clear at the time that the principle of gender-neutrality became common in family law – in the 1960s and 1970s. Only recently has burgeoning research on the subject begun to more clearly affirm the value of fathering and to clarify the conditions under which pre and post separation fathering makes a positive difference. Paradoxically, it is at this very time that legally based challenges to the gender-neutral, shared-parenting philosophy of the 1995 Australian Family Law Reform Act have begun to emerge. The often perplexed interface between law, social science research and therapeutic intervention presents many challenges. The author concludes by flagging a number of questions relevant to family therapists in this difficult field of work.

Rhoades, H. (2000), 'Child law reforms in Australia: a shifting landscape', *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 117-133.

The Family Law Reform Act 1995 (the Reform Act) is intended to alter the ways in which parents and the community think about and make arrangements for children following parental separation, and in particular, to reduce disputes and maintain relationships between children and their parents. Further amendments were aimed at ensuring that post separation parenting arrangements did not expose children and their carers to an unacceptable risk of family violence. This article examines the impact of the Reform Act upon the people it was intended to affect. The interim findings of recent research into the effects of the reforms are summarised, including an assessment of the success to date of the government's aims and a look at some of the unintended

consequences of the changes. Issues discussed include: practitioners' advice to parents; shared residence arrangements; the right to contact versus safety from domestic violence; litigated disputes; shared parenting; contact and domestic violence; and litigation and settlement.

Seddon, E. & Disney, H. (1999), 'It's not all over: families after divorce and separation' in Shaver, S. & Saunders, P. (eds) *Social Policy for the 21st Century: Justice and Responsibility: Proceedings of the National Social Policy Conference, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, vol. 1, pp. 213-225 (SPRC reports and proceedings no. 141)*.

The changing patterns of family structures over time are explored in this paper which looks at the different pathways families may take at separation and how these pathways impact upon positive parenting. The factors that help or hinder separating couples in developing a positive and ongoing parenting partnership are identified and the implications for programs and services as well as for public policy, are considered.

Sheehan, G. & Fehlberg, B. (2000), 'Families, divorce and family law: introduction and overview', *Family Matters*, no. 55, Autumn, pp. 4-9.

This is an overview article which introduces the central theme of this edition of Family Matters – the reorganisation of the family unit throughout the divorce transition. It also discusses the articles in the edition that address this theme, and identifies the distinct themes which arise from them: divergent (and gendered) pathways out of economic disadvantage post separation and divorce; tensions between the ideal of continuing, shared parental responsibility and the reality (in relation to financial support for young adult children, and post-separation parenting arrangements); and the practical impact on families of Australia's fragmented family law system.



### Parenting education for children with special needs

'Study shows benefit of community-based parenting support' (1999), *VicHealth Letter*, no. 11, Autumn, p. 12, and Online: <http://www.vic.health.vic.gov.au/publicat/vhlrchv/vhl11.pdf>.

This article reports on a project of the Psychology Department of the Royal Children's Hospital which has evaluated an early intervention program aimed at reducing behavioural difficulties in children before they enter primary school. Parents of children attending five kindergartens in the Melbourne suburb of Brimbank were offered training sessions to learn ways of helping their children gain social skills. The project also introduced the children to early reading skills in the hope that it would give them a head start in language and literacy when they started school.

Hazell, P. (2000), *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Preschool Aged Children*, Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People, Adelaide, 42p, (Clinical approaches to early intervention in child and adolescent mental health, vol. 1), and Online: <http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au/pubs/index.html>.

The need for guidelines for early intervention for preschool children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) was identified by the Australian Early Intervention Network (AusEinet). The guidelines presented in this book have been developed according to the process recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council and are designed to provide information to assist decision making for professionals. Issues discussed include: prevalence of ADHD in preschool children; validity of diagnosis; assessment; parent behaviour management; special classroom programs; recreational family therapy;

social skills training; pharmacotherapy; diet; medical history and examination; mental health history; parent child interaction and family functioning; and functioning in preschool and child care.

Sanders, M. R., Gooley, S. & Nicholson, J. (2000), *Early Intervention in Conduct Problems in Children*, Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People, Adelaide, 131p, (Clinical approaches to early intervention in child and adolescent mental health, vol. 3), and Online: <http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au/pubs/index.html>.

Intended as a reference guide to assist mental health professionals to detect and treat some forms of conduct problems in children who are less than 12 years of age, this document examines the following issues: classification of conduct problems in children; development and course of conduct problems; prevalence; risk and protective factors; behaviour rating scales; differential diagnosis; family interventions; child-focused treatment approaches; school-based interventions; psychopharmacology; and structural obstacles to early intervention.



### Cultural issues in parenting

Atkinson, S. & Swain, S. (1999), 'A network of support: mothering across the Koorie community in Victoria, Australia', *Women's History Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 219-230.

This article, built around a case study conducted by Koorie scholar Sue Atkinson, is concerned with an analysis of patterns of mothering in the contemporary Koorie community in Victoria. The effect of colonialism on Aboriginal culture is considered, highlighting the intergenerational effects of the policy of child removal and the loss of parenting skills. The contemporary Koorie extended

family model is described with reference to issues of: the status and role of female elders; Koorie identity and the extended family; traditional understandings of kinship; the principle of multiple mothering; work and family; professional women as role models; single parenting; racism; and the need to revalue this Koorie model of mothering.

**Connell, M. L. (2000), 'Parenting in a multicultural society', *Family Services Australia Newsletter*, no. 21, March, pp. 16-17.**

The problems faced by migrant parents in bringing up their children in a multicultural society like Australia are discussed in this article. Cross cultural differences and conflicting values and behaviours of both children and parents are among the issues addressed, and advice from the Department of Family and Children's Services within Western Australia is presented.

**Harnett, P., Clarke, C. & Shochet, I. (1998), 'Promoting family and community resilience in indigenous communities: cultural adaptation of the Resourceful Adolescent Parent Program', *AusEinetter*, no. 7, December, pp. 1-3, and Online: <http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au/netter7/netter.htm>.**

Over the past few years the Griffith Early Intervention Project has been involved in the national dissemination of the Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) for the prevention of depression in young people. Adapted from RAP, the Resourceful Adolescent Program for Parents (RAP-P) aims to provide an opportunity for parents to reflect on their personal strengths on the assumption that the self-esteem and confidence of parents are fundamental to effectively promoting self-esteem and confidence in their children. The program helps parents consider the relationship between stress and their own emotional reactivity in interpersonal situations and works towards increasing parental effectiveness by encouraging emotional regulation and emphasising the importance of social support. An important contribution of the program is in focusing parents

on their existing strengths. Noting that this component of the program has been extremely successful in workshops run in indigenous communities in central Queensland and north-western New South Wales, the authors describe the process of modifying RAP-P for the indigenous community. The consultation process is described, as are the content of RAP-P, the context in which it is to be implemented, adjunct treatments, and future directions.

**Kolar, V. (1998), "I always swore I wasn't going to be like my mother as a parent": intergenerational change and continuity', Paper presented at the 6th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, November, 16p, and Online: <http://www.aifs.org.au/institute/afrc6papers/kolar.html>.**

Parenting-21 is a study that explores how Australian parents from various cultural backgrounds pass on their values to their children. In particular, the study focuses on child rearing attitudes and practices and how these relate to cultural beliefs about the nature of childhood. Parenting-21 aims to: provide a detailed picture of how ordinary Australian families are raising their children today, preparing them for life into the next century; compare the influence of various cultural backgrounds when raising children; and contribute to discussions on the development of support services for families with young children. The paper summarises findings from interviews conducted with families with a child in one of five target age groups (6 months, 18 months, 3 years, 4.5 years and 8 years). Specifically, findings relate to parents' descriptions of their own families of origin, and to what extent that experience has impacted upon their personal parenting style. This study was conducted in collaboration with the International Study of Parents, Children and Schools and involves researchers from Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.

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