

SOME MYTHS ABOUT FAMILIES

an extract from

Porter, L. (2008). *Teacher-parent collaboration*,
ACER, Melbourne



We often hear 'doom and gloom' about the modern family and its ability to raise well-adjusted children. However, this paper reports that many of our fears are based on myths and that it is the parenting *processes* which occur in families which affect children's adjustment, not the type of families in which they are reared (Papero 2005).

FAMILY COMPOSITION

One myth is that families today lack the supports of their extended family network because the generations no longer live together as they once did. However, the truth is that, certainly in Western cultures, extended family members have never lived together, because the short life expectancy meant that the grandparental generation had died. Despite mythology, households in Britain have been stable in size over the last 400 years (Bottomley 1983). Between 1574 and 1821, only 11 per cent of British households included extended kin of any kind (Waters & Crook 1993). Thus, other than the aristocracy, Western households have always been basically nuclear.

The myth of a lack of extended family support could even be the reverse. Today, increased longevity means that members of older generations are still alive and, while they may not be geographically close, mass communication and fast transport mean that, nevertheless, extended family can be emotionally supportive (Waters & Crook 1993). There is a distinction, then, between extended *households* – which, as just mentioned, are now and have always been a minority – and extended *kinship*, which is now more available than ever, particularly during family crises.

A second aspect of family size is the number of children. Australian women are having slightly fewer children now than in the past, but only marginally so. As can be seen in Table 1, women born in the 1860s had larger families, but once birth control became practised in the early 1900s, the birth rate dropped from its previously high level. There was a slight rise in births to women born in the 1930s, which came about because they were marrying younger; the modern decrease in births comes about mainly because of the longer gap between marriage and the birth of the first child (Waters & Crook 1993).

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF BIRTHS TO COHORTS OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

WOMEN BORN	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
1861-1866	5.1
1903-1908	2.6
1928-1938	3.2
1940s	2.9
1960s	2.2
1999	1.7

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006; McDonald 1993; Waters and Crook 1993.

WORKING PARENTS

In 1996 in two-parent families with the youngest child aged under five, 49 per cent of mothers were in paid employment (predominantly part-time); with children aged 10-14 years, 71 per cent of mothers worked outside of home (ABS 2006). This represents increased workforce participation for women. A second trend is that the combined working hours of parents has increased, as individual employees are working longer hours.

Nevertheless, having two working parents has a strong precedent in history when, prior to child labour laws and the introduction of universal education at the beginning of the 20th century, working class women (and their children) always worked. Even once women were relegated to home duties, most were *never* wealthy enough to have the choice between domestic and non-domestic labour: they always had to do both (Bottomley 1983), while women of all classes in Australia participated at high rates in the work force during war years and times of economic depression. Indeed, our concept that mothers should remain at home full-time dates from the 1950s and thus was both a recent idea and a departure from the pattern of previous eras.

Having two working parents – or an employed sole parent – improves adolescents' health and wellbeing (Weston 1993). Mothers' participation in the work force during their children's early years is beneficial for the children's development, especially for families on a low income. This is because paid employment can assist the family to meet the costs of children's developmental needs (Harvey 1999). Employed women sacrifice time on household, leisure and social activities to devote proportionally more time with their children, spending between 66 and 84 per cent of the time spent by mothers who are home full-time, which difference causes no decrements in the children's skills (Huston & Aronson 2005). Similarly, during young people's secondary schooling, working mothers devote barely any less time to them than do mothers who are home full-time, with no discernible effects on their adolescents' school achievements (Feinstein & Symons 1999). Thus, the *amount* of time that mothers spend with their children is unrelated to their development (Huston & Aronson 2005). Rather, it is mothers' investment in parenting and thus how they allocate the time available to them that predicts the quality of care that they provide their infants (Huston & Aronson 2005).

The effects on children of having both parents in paid employment depend on the parents' working circumstances. Impoverished parents who gain employment are better adjusted (as evidenced by less depression) and therefore use less coercive parenting (Dearing et al. 2006; Raver 2003), while their children (girls in particular) are less aggressive, more independent and achieve better at school (Fuller et al. 2002). Parents' and children's adjustment improves when mothers' employment pays well enough to raise them out of poverty (Dearing et al. 2006; Fuller et al. 2002); when returning to work does not involve stressful or prolonged commuting (Dunifon et al. 2005); or lead to inadequate monitoring of the children (Macmillan et al. 2004); impose full-time work during children's first year (Hill et al. 2005); or result in low-quality or unstable child care arrangements (Papero 2005; Youngblade 2003).

DIVORCE

The doomsday scenario is that today's high divorce rate will result in the demise of the family altogether. However, divorce dissolves *marriages*: it does not dissolve families. The present divorce rate does not indicate a decline in the importance of marriage, but a continued commitment to monogamy, albeit in a serial form.

Despite the divorce rate, marriages last longer today than ever before. This somewhat surprising state of affairs comes about because spouses now live longer, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE OF MARRIAGES WHERE BOTH PARTNERS ARE STILL ALIVE

	1891	1991
After 30 years	46%	88%
After 45 years	15%	56%

Source: McDonald 1993.

On its own, this table tells us little, but when we add the rate of divorce at the beginning of the 20th century (1 per cent) and informal separations (thought to be around 10 per cent) to the death rates of the times, the percentage of Australian marriages that endure for 30 years is higher now than a hundred years ago, as shown in Table 3. Thus, the two-parent family remains the dominant family type. While 40 per cent of all marriages end in divorce, the reverse statistic is that up to 60 per cent of people will stay married to the same person until one partner dies (ABS 2006).

TABLE 3 PERCENTAGE OF MARRIAGES WHERE BOTH PARTNERS ARE STILL ALIVE AND TOGETHER

	1891	1991	2000
After 30 years	41%	53%	60%

Source: ABS 2006; McDonald 1993.

The duration of marriages that end in divorce is also increasing marginally, with couples in 2003 separating after 8.7 years of marriage, compared with 7.6 years a decade earlier (ABS 2006). This means that divorce is increasingly likely to occur before children are born. Nevertheless, just over half of Australian divorces are to couples with dependent children (Amato 2000; Harrison 1993). The number of children whose parents divorce goes up by about one per cent per year of the children's age, with the result that by the age of 18, 18 per cent of all children will experience their parents' divorce (Harrison 1993; McDonald 1993). We could rue these figures, but their converse is that over three-quarters of children live most of their childhood with both biological parents.

Separation and divorce threaten individuals' sense of belonging, which is an innate human need (Sheldon et al. 2001). Therefore, we can expect some short- and longer-term effects on both parents and their children in the years of estrangement that can precede separation, during the divorce process itself and for some time subsequently. Although persistent family conflict is harmful to children, parental separation still produces at the time small increases in the emotional and behavioural

problems of young children in particular (Cheng et al. 2006). In the years prior to a divorce and in its immediate aftermath, there can be an exacerbation of social, emotional, behavioural and academic problems in young people, particularly when they have pre-existing vulnerabilities (Amato 2000).

A separation or divorce can set in train a series of additional losses, such as moving house, school or neighbourhood, changes in parents' employment status and children's care and schooling arrangements, financial hardship, and subsequent repartnering of one or both parents. These subsequent changes add to the adjustments that children need to make to the separation itself. On the other hand, divorce allows couples and their children to leave violent or unsupportive relationships. Young people growing up in these households experience more stress and disillusionment with relationships than those who grow up in single-parent families with a parent who is less stressed (Amato 2000; Burns & Goodnow 1985).

In the long term, divorce of their parents prior to age 16 lowers young people's educational attainment (although this could reflect a reduction in family income which means that the family has insufficient resources to support the children's continued education), earlier onset of emotional difficulties and earlier sexual debut, tobacco and alcohol use (D'Onofrio et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the differences in adjustment between children of divorced and intact families are small (Amato 2000). Whether in the longer-term (within two to three years), children return to their pre-divorce levels of adjustment depends on:

- how the children view their parents' divorce: approximately one-third believe it is their fault, while others are relieved to see an end to their parents' misery and their own victimhood, particularly in violent families;
- the children's ability to use active coping in contrast with avoidance or distraction;
- their sense of control over events;
- the level of social support they receive;
- whether the economic hardships (particularly experienced by women) endure and later restrict the children's opportunities;
- the quality or responsiveness of parenting that the children receive;
- whether the couple's conflict is resolved by their separation;
- their parents' subsequent emotional adjustment;
- whether the children can maintain high-quality contact with the non-residential parent (Amato 2000; Dunn 2004; Dunn et al. 2004; Spence et al. 2002).

It seems that, when children experience *persistent* emotional difficulties following their parents' divorce, they would have developed these problems anyway (D'Onofrio et al. 2007), while their antisocial behaviour is due not to their parents' separation itself, but to the acrimony, parenting problems and socioeconomic difficulties that preceded and contributed to the divorce and which may still be ongoing after the separation (Amato 2000; D'Onofrio et al. 2007).

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

From 1986 to 1996 in Australia, the proportion of one-parent families with dependent children rose from 15 to 19 per cent (ABS 2006). The vast majority of these families (87 per cent) are headed by women. Three-quarters of single parent households result from dissolution of marriage between the two parents, with the remaining quarter typically being due to the ending of a de facto relationship. Just 12 per cent of lone mothers are aged under 24 (ABS 2006).

Mother-headed households have been a significant feature of many societies and classes over time, including in those societies where the nuclear family has been idealised (Bottomley 1983). In the United States, 28 to 34 per cent of white children born between 1920 and 1960 lived with one or no biological parent; the figure for the same period for African-Americans was 55 to 60 per cent (Hanson & Carta 1995). In Australia, mother-headed households have been commonplace for almost all of White settlement (see Table 4) as fathers went to gold fields, fought in a series of wars and sought work away from home during times of economic recession. It was only in the 1950s that two-parent, single-income families became the norm. Outside of that era, the mothers who remained at home managed to rear their children successfully; they can still do so today.

TABLE 2.4 PERCENTAGE OF AUSTRALIAN SOLE-PARENT FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN

1991	16.6%
1974	9.2%
1891	16.7%

Source: McDonald 1993.

At the same time, single parenthood can be stressful for the adults (Williford et al. 2007), potentially reduce parental supervision and support for the children, and may not allow for one parent to act as a check on the other's overly lax or controlling discipline (Sandefur & Wells 1999). Some research reports that any deleterious effects are due not to being raised by a single parent as such, but by three factors often accompanying single parenthood. The first and most fundamental of these is poverty. Women earn less than men overall and, during marriage, are employed for fewer hours and thus achieve promotions less than men; therefore upon separation, mother-headed households are more likely to be in the lowest income bracket, to rent rather than own their accommodation, to live with another family to share expenses, and to have limited access to private transport (McDonald 1993). Single mothers find it harder to work and raise young children alone, with 36 per cent of lone mothers with children aged under five working in paid employment, compared to 49 per cent of partnered mothers. Sole-parent families are particularly likely to be destitute if their family finances were strained before the separation.

The second deleterious event associated with sole-parent families is that these are often the result of parental conflict. However, when the separation ends the conflict, the children are less stressed than when their family is intact but there is ongoing disharmony between their parents (Burns & Goodnow 1985; Dearing et al. 2006).

The third characteristic that can reduce child adjustment as a result of being raised in a sole parent family is when the residential parent experiences a series of disharmonious romantic partnerships. It seems that, while children raised by stably single parents are as well adjusted as those in two-parent, contented families (Spence et al. 2002), children can be stressed by a series of structural changes in the family that occur when their parent endures a sequence of unsuccessful relationships (Haveman & Wolfe 1995; Sandefur & Wells 1999).

Single parenthood need not produce poor outcomes in children, however, with some studies finding no deleterious effects on young children's academic skills (Downer & Pianta 2006) and others finding only marginal reductions in the duration

of their schooling (Sandefur & Wells 1999). Single parenthood does not diminish parents' interest in their child's schooling and indirect support at home, although it can limit their presence at school (Kohl et al. 2000). In terms of young people's emotional adjustment, many in sole-parent families report that they enjoy a particularly close relationship with their parent (Golombok et al. 2003; MacCallum & Golombok 2004; Weston 1993). The reduced conflict in these families and possibly increased social support from extended family and friends account for the fact that children are better adjusted in sole-parent families than in conflicted two-parent families (Dearing et al. 2006). Children with antisocial fathers are better adjusted when their father is *not* present in the family (Jaffee et al. 2003), while the absence of a parent who took no interest in their children's education makes no difference to young people's eventual secondary school attainment (Feinstein & Symons 1999).

YOUNG MOTHERS

It has been assumed that the immaturity of teenaged parents means that they are less able to nurture their children (Bornstein et al. 2006; Gowen & Nebrig 2002). However, although young mothers may offer less cognitive stimulation for their infants, in reasonably supportive families they are as nurturing as older mothers (Bornstein et al. 2006; McGroder 2000). At any age, mothers will be less responsive in their parenting when enduring poverty, family disruption, unemployment or partner abuse, and when they have a history of abuse or neglect in their own childhood (Ellis et al. 2003; Fergusson & Woodward 2000; Jenkins et al. 2006; Moffitt & the E-Risk Study Team 2002; Turley 2003). These adverse circumstances increase their children's propensity for childhood illness and injury, behavioural problems including adolescent delinquency, teen parenthood, and poor academic achievement (Moffitt & the E-Risk Study Team 2002; Turley 2003). The children start school at lower levels of functioning and remain behind their age-mates throughout the school years (Turley 2003). The net result can be that children of these parents leave school earlier (three-quarters of a year sooner) than those in more advantaged families (Boyle et al. 2007).

These outcomes are due to family adversity, however, not to the age of the mother. This is verified by two facts; first, that babies born to these mothers later in life are as disadvantaged as those born to them in their teens (Turley 2003). Second, even when they have their own children at the typical childbearing age, the sisters of teen mothers have equally disadvantaged children (Turley 2003). This, then, reflects the socioeconomic wellbeing of the sisters' family of origin, not the age at which they became mothers.

LESBIAN MOTHERS

In one study, one in five lesbian women had or lived with children (Millbank 2002, in Semann 2004). Whereas it was once assumed that this would affect the children's gender identity, it is now clear that children raised by lesbian mothers have similar romantic relationships and sexual orientation to all other young people (Golombok et al. 2003; MacCallum & Golombok 2004; Wainright et al. 2004). Having lesbian parents seems to produce in children greater awareness of discrimination and more accepting attitudes to nonconformity to gender roles (Wainright et al. 2004).

Findings on other measures fail to distinguish between children raised by lesbian versus heterosexual mothers (Wainright et al. 2004). Both groups of children have similar self-esteem, personal adjustment, academic achievement and neighbourhood integration. One fear has been that the children would be subjected to more peer harassment because of heterosexist discrimination against their gay or lesbian parent. However, young people have not reported this, although on their

children's behalf their mothers report a slightly increased incidence (Golombok et al. 2003).

This leaves one remaining potential concern for children growing up with two female parents – that is, the absence of a father figure. This fear is also unfounded: regardless of whether their mother is homosexual or heterosexual, boys in fatherless families display slightly more feminine but no less masculine behaviour (MacCallum & Golombok 2004). They experience a similar quality of parenting, with lesbian and co-mothers more likely to use egalitarian discipline and more equally sharing child care and household duties than occurs in heterosexual families (Bos et al. 2004; Golombok et al. 2003; MacCallum & Golombok 2004; Wainright et al. 2004). When their mothers have a partner, children of lesbian parents can experience warmer care from their social mother than from their biological fathers (Golombok et al. 2003).

The only disadvantage of being raised by lesbian parents is that, regardless of their sexual orientation, sole parents can be more stressed and more likely to be impoverished (Golombok et al. 2003; MacCallum & Golombok 2004). In that case, it is the poverty, not the parents' sexual orientation that affects their children.

STEPPFAMILIES

Stepfamilies are as common today as in the 16th and 17th centuries (Whelan & Kelly 1986), although today they typically succeed parental divorce rather than the death of a parent, making the children's adjustment somewhat different.

A newly formed stepfamily is not the same as a biological family, dealing with the usual challenges of the life stage suggested by the ages of the children. The fact that the *marriage* is new determines the demands on the family. Stepfamilies need different operating principles than nuclear families, because they are performing many roles at once, with responsibilities spread across their present and former families, and are negotiating complex relationships among all family members. The elevated divorce rate in second and subsequent marriages attests to the difficulty of achieving all this.

At the time that their parent forms a new couple relationship, you might see at school a resurgence of the behavioural difficulties that children displayed at the time of their parents' original separation. Their grief can be renewed not only because the repartnering signals the finality of their parents' separation, but because it can lead to fewer contacts with their nonresident biological parent, while their parent's closeness with a new partner can be seen by children as a rejection of themselves, especially when it does in fact lead to less one-on-one time with their parent. These behavioural and emotional reactions can persist because at home, where the same phenomenon is being experienced, the children's reactions raise unfamiliar parenting issues.

In terms of educational outcomes for children, there is some evidence that being part of a stepfamily has the same effects as being in a single-parent family – namely, a marginal reduction (measured in months) in the duration of children's schooling (Sandefur & Wells 1999). This is probably a result of the stress from the original separation and from changes in family structures, rather than to any qualities inherent in stepfamilies as such.

CONCLUSION

Children grow up accepting the family type in which they are reared. Indeed, 'this is how cultures are transmitted' (Bottomley 1983: 12). The conclusion from examining these diverse families is that it is not the type of family which influences children's outcomes, but the quality of the parenting which the children receive, which is independent of family type (Cleveland et al. 2000; Papero 2005).

FURTHER READING

Divorce

- Burrett, J. (1999). *But I want to stay with you: Talking with children about separation and divorce*. Sydney: Simon and Schuster.
- Teyber, E. (1992). *Helping children cope with divorce*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wells, R. (1997). *Helping children cope with divorce*. London: Sheldon.
- Weyburne, D. (1999). *What to tell the kids about your divorce*. Oakland, CA: Harbinger.

Stepfamilies

- Boyd, H. (1998). *The step-parent's survival guide*. London: Ward Lock.
- Hart-Byers, S. (1998). *Secrets of successful step-families*. Port Melbourne, VIC: Lothian.
- Rodwell, J. (2002). *Repartnered families*. Auckland: Penguin.

REFERENCES

- Amato, P.R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62 (4), 1269-1287.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). 3101.0 – Australian Demographic statistics, Sep 2004. Retrieved 25 July 2007, from <http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/featurearticlesbyReleaseDate/7F31BF47DCE50135CA256FCE000007E6?OpenDocument>
- Bornstein, M.H., Putnick, D.L., Suwalsky, J.T.D. & Gini, M. (2006). Maternal chronological age, prenatal and perinatal history, social support, and parenting of infants. *Child Development*, 77 (4), 875-892.
- Bos, H.M.W., van Balen, F. & van den Boom, D.C. (2004). Experience of parenthood, couple relationship, social support, and child-rearing goals in planned lesbian mother families. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45 (4), 755-764.
- Bottomley, G. (1983). Review of historical and sociological models of 'the family'. In A. Burns, G. Bottomley and P. Jools (Eds.) *The family in the modern world*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, pp. 3-18.
- Boyle, M.H., Georgiades, K., Racine, Y. & Mustard, C. (2007). Neighborhood and family influences on educational attainment: Results from the Ontario child health study follow-up 2001. *Child Development*, 78 (1), 168-189.
- Burns, A. & Goodnow, J. (1985). *Children and families in Australia*. (2nd ed.) Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Cheng, H., Dunn, J., O'Connor, T.G., Golding, J. & the ALSPAC Study Team (2006). Factors moderating children's adjustment to parental separation: Findings from a community study in England. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 34 (2), 230-241.
- Cleveland, H.H., Wiebe, R.P., van den Oord, E.J.C.G. & Rowe, D.C. (2000). Behavior problems among children from different family structures: The influence of genetic self-selection. *Child Development*, 71 (3), 733-751.
- Dearing, E., McCartney, K. & Taylor, B.A. (2006). Within-child associations between family income and externalizing and internalizing problems. *Developmental Psychology*, 42 (2), 237-252.
- D'Onofrio, B.M., Turkheimer, E., Emery, R.E., Maes, H.H., Silberg, J. & Eaves, L.J. (2007). A children of twins study of parental divorce and offspring psychopathology. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48 (7), 667-675.
- D'Onofrio, B.M., Turkheimer, E., Emery, R.E., Slutske, W.S., Heath, A.C., Madden, P.A. & Martin, N.G. (2006). A genetically informed study of the processes underlying the association between parental marital instability and offspring adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 42 (3), 486-499.

- Downer, J.T. & Pianta, R.C. (2006). Academic and cognitive functioning in first grade: Associations with earlier home and child care predictors and with concurrent home and classroom experiences. *School Psychology Review*, 35 (1), 11-30.
- Dunifon, R., Kalil, A. & Bajracharya, A. (2005). Maternal working conditions and child well-being in welfare-leaving families. *Developmental Psychology*, 41 (6), 851-859.
- Dunn, J. (2004). Annotation: Children's relationships with their nonresident fathers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45 (4), 659-671.
- Dunn, J., Cheng, H., O'Connor, T.G. & Bridges, L. (2004). Children's perspectives on their relationships with their nonresident fathers: Influences, outcomes and implication. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45 (3), 553-566.
- Ellis, B.J., Bates, J.E., Dodge, K.A., Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., Pettit, G.S. & Woodward, L. (2003). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? *Child Development*, 74 (3), 801-821.
- Feinstein, L. & Symons, J. (1999). Attainment in secondary school. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 51 (2), 300-321.
- Fergusson, D.M. & Woodward, L.J. (2000). Teenage pregnancy and female educational underachievement: A prospective study of a New Zealand birth cohort. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62 (1), 147-161.
- Fuller, B., Caspary, G., Kagan, S.L., Gauthier, C., Huang, D.S.-C., Carroll, J. & McCarthy, J. (2002). Does maternal employment influence poor children's social development? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 17 (4), 470-497.
- Golombok, S., Perry, B., Burston, A., Murray, C., Mooney-Somers, J., Stevens, M. & Golding, J. (2003). Children with lesbian parents: A community study. *Developmental Psychology*, 39 (1), 20-33.
- Gowen, J.W. & Nebrig, J.B. (2002). *Enhancing early emotional development: Guiding parents of young children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Hanson, M.J. & Carta, J.J. (1995). Addressing the challenges of families with multiple risks. *Exceptional Children*, 62 (3), 201-212.
- Harrison, M. (1993). *Family law and marriage breakdown in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Harvey, E. (1999). Short-term and long-term effects of early parental employment on children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. *Developmental Psychology*, 35 (2), 445-459.
- Haveman, R. & Wolfe, B. (1995). The determinants of children's attainments: A review of methods and findings. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 33 (4), 1829-1878.
- Hill, J.L., Waldfogel, J., Brooks-Gunn, J. & Han, W.-J. (2005). Maternal employment and child development: A fresh look using newer methods. *Developmental Psychology*, 41 (6), 833-850.
- Huston, A.C. & Aronson, S.R. (2005). Mothers' time with infant and time in employment as predictors of mother-child relationships and children's early development. *Child Development*, 76 (2), 467-482.
- Jaffee, S.R., Moffitt, T.E., Caspi, A. & Taylor, A. (2003). Life with (or without) father: The benefits of living with two biological parents depend on the father's antisocial behavior. *Child Development*, 74 (1), 109-126.
- Jenkins, J.M., Shapka, J.D. & Sorenson, A.M. (2006). Teenage mothers' anger over twelve years: Partner conflict, partner transitions and children's anger. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47 (8), 775-782.
- Kohl, G.O., Lengua, L.J., McMahon, R.J. & the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2000). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38 (6), 501-523.
- MacCallum, F. & Golombok, S. (2004). Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: A follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers at early adolescence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45 (8), 1407-1419.

- McDonald, P. (1993). *Family trends and structure in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- McGroder, S.M. (2000). Parenting among low-income, African American single mothers with preschool-age children: Patterns, predictors, and developmental correlates. *Child Development*, 71 (3), 752-771.
- Moffitt, T.E. & The E-Risk Study Team (2002). Teen-aged mothers in contemporary Britain. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 43 (6), 727-742.
- Papero, A.L. (2005). Is early, high-quality daycare an asset for children of low-income, depressed mothers? *Developmental Review*, 25 (2), 181-211.
- Raver, C.C. (2003). Does work pay psychologically as well as economically?: The role of employment in predicting depressive symptoms and parenting among low-income families. *Child Development*, 74 (6), 1720-1736.
- Sandefur, G.D. & Wells, T. (1999). Does family structure really influence educational attainment? *Social Science Research*, 28 (4), 331-357.
- Semann, A. (2004). Caught in the closet: The silencing of sexuality in early childhood education. *Every Child*, 10 (4), 20-21.
- Sheldon, K.M., Elliott, A.J., Kim, Y. & Kasser, T. (2001). What is satisfying about satisfying events?: Testing 10 candidate psychological needs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80 (2), 325-339.
- Spence, S.H., Najman, J.M., Bor, W., O'Callaghan, M.J. & Williams, G.M. (2002). Maternal anxiety and depression, poverty and marital relationship factors during early childhood as predictors of anxiety and depressive symptoms in adolescence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 43 (4), 457-469.
- Turley, R.N.L. (2003). Are children of young mothers disadvantaged because of their mother's age or family background? *Child Development*, 74 (2), 465-474.
- Wainright, J.L., Russell, S.T. & Patterson, C.J. (2004). Psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes, and romantic relationships of adolescents with same-sex parents. *Child Development*, 75 (6), 1886-1898.
- Waters, M. & Crook, R. (1993). *Sociology one: Principles of sociological analysis for Australians*. (3rd ed.) Melbourne: Longman.
- Weston, R. (1993). Well-being of young people in different family circumstances. *Family Matters*, 36, 28-30.
- Whelan, T. & Kelly, S. (1986). *A hard act to follow: Step-parenting in Australia today*. Melbourne: Penguin.
- Williford, A.P., Calkins, S.D. & Keane, S.P. (2007). Predicting change in parenting stress across early childhood: Child and maternal factors. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 35 (2), 251-263.
- Youngblade, L.M. (2003). Peer and teacher rating of third- and fourth-grade children's social behavior as a function of early maternal employment. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 44 (4), 477-488.