

Child Focused and Inclusive Practice with Families Post Divorce

Associate Professor Lisbeth Pike, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, Western Australia, 6027, Australia

Dr Alan Campbell, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, Western Australia, 6027, Australia

Ms Jennie Hannan, Anglicare Western Australia, 23 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth, Western Australia 6839, Australia

Prologue

Working with families and children post divorce is a demanding and sensitive area of work. In Western Australia, Anglicare WA established a pilot program in 1999 to work with separating parents and their families. This program has since become Australia's leader in this area. Components of the program include group work for adults and children as well as child inclusive mediation. Counselling is also offered for both adults and children.

This paper, and the workshop presentation, will review this innovative program. Research on outcomes for adults involved in the program and feedback from children who have participated will be presented.

Introduction to the *Mums and Dads Forever* Program

The literature suggests that children's adjustment after divorce is highly dependent upon parental cooperation (Amato, 1993; Whiteside, 1998). Children whose parents can cooperate and make decisions in the best interests of their children are more easily able to adjust to their new residential arrangements and separated family life (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1991; Dozier, Sollie, Stack & Smith, 1993; Maccoby, Depner & Mnookin, 1990). While most separating parents are able to achieve a functional level of co-parenting, a significant number have considerable difficulty with this concept (Lamb, Sternberg & Thompson, 1997). The latter group often remain embittered and actively hostile for many years, which places their children at a significant risk of experiencing negative psychological and social outcomes (Lamb et al., 1997). High conflict parents and couples are identified with multiple characteristics including:

- high rates of litigation and re-litigation;
- high degrees of anger and distrust;
- intermittent verbal and/or physical aggression;
- difficulty focussing on the needs of their children and the fact that their children's needs are separate from their own; and
- chronic difficulty co-parenting and communicating about the children after separation.

These factors are often further exacerbated by a history of violence, substance and alcohol abuse, and mental illness.

In response to these difficulties, the Australian Commonwealth Government established the Parenting Orders Program (POP) in 1999. The broad aims of this program are to:

- Reduce levels of litigation for parents.
- Reduce parental conflict and disputes over parenting.
- Promote greater compliance with Parenting Orders or the ability to work together to build new Orders that suit the family's needs.
- Provide alternatives to litigation over contact.
- Provide alternatives to current penalties for breach of Contact Orders.
- Reduce levels of stress for children in divorce proceedings

The Australian Government expects that, through participating in this program:

- Children's relationships with contact parents will be re-established or maintained.
- Children's voices will be heard and respected through a greater recognition of their needs and increased parental abilities to appropriately address them.
- Parents will have a greater understanding of their children's needs and interests.
- Children will have an improved relationship with both parents.

In Western Australia, Anglicare WA developed a group program for parents to meet these aims and to achieve outcomes that facilitated change for families experiencing high conflict. The overall intention of the program, called *Mums and Dads Forever* (MDF), is to increase parents' knowledge about the separation process and its impact on all family members, especially children. In particular, parents learn about how their conflicts impact on their children and how they might change their attitudes and behaviours towards their former partners. Additionally, parents are helped to deal with their children's reactions to separation. The program aims to help parents improve the quality of their relationship together for the benefit of their children (Campbell, 2005).

The program has become closely aligned with the Family Court of Western Australia. Consequently, about half of the adult group participants are mandated to attend as part of the court process, while about 40% are referred by either the court or legal practitioners and about 10% are voluntary clients. Groups consist of a mix of these participants and are, as far as possible, balanced for gender. Residence and contact arrangements for the children represented by the adults in these groups are also diverse. These factors become influential in the dynamics that develop in each group and significantly influence the changes that some participants make during the group.

The program comprises eight 2 hour sessions and covers the following topic areas:

- Focussing on the children
- Knowing self
- Understanding our own grief and accepting change
- Understanding the effects of grief on children
- Communication
- Managing disputes and high emotions
- Problem solving
- The future

Evaluation of the *Mums and Dads Forever* Parent Education Program

A recent study was conducted in conjunction with Edith Cowan University to determine whether the *Mums and Dads Forever* group program was achieving its stated objectives which included increasing parents' knowledge about the effects of separation on children and parents, promoting changes in attitude towards the non-residential parent, reducing inter-parental conflict and improving the quality of the co-parenting relationship. Additionally, the study explored whether participants assessed the group program as helpful and effective. A journal article describing the study and its findings is currently in preparation and will be available later this year. A brief description is provided here, however.

The study used a quantitative design to measure 113 (54 male, 59 female) participants' reactions to their involvement in the *Mums and Dads Forever* program. All participants had attended an 8-week MDF program during 2004. The mean age of participants was 34 years, with ages ranging from 22 to 60 years. The mean time since separation was 2 years. Research participants represented over 200 children aged between 0 and 25 years. Pre and post group program self-report questionnaires were developed using a combination of

purpose designed and existing psychometric measures. T-tests revealed that participation in the program resulted in increased knowledge, reduction in inter-parental conflict and issues concerning contact and changeover periods and improvement in the quality of the co-parenting relationship. There was, however, no change in participants' attitudes towards their ex partner, even though conflict between them had decreased. Participants considered the program to be useful and helpful. These results suggest that this type of post-separation parenting education can and does make a difference for many parents. Most importantly, this research finds that the MDF post-separation parenting education program works.

Change Wizards Children's Program

In addition to the adult program, POP also provides direct interventions with children via a group work program and individual counselling as well as an opportunity to become involved in child inclusive mediation processes where appropriate. This program has been developed over the past 12 months to provide a safe and supportive place for children to identify and express their feelings, thoughts and needs in relation to their parents' separation, to develop ways of feeling good about themselves in the face of many challenges, and to feel hopeful about the future. The program also invites parents to develop greater insight about their children's experiences and to explore ways of responding sensitively and effectively to their children's needs.

Referral to the children's group program is usually received from parents who have entered the *Mums and Dads* group program, or from counsellors working with Anglicare WA or other family services agencies. Following referral, a one-hour intake process with only the parent provides an opportunity to gather relevant information, some of which may be unhelpful for the child to overhear, and for the parent to discuss her/his concerns about the child(ren). The best way of contacting, seeking consent and involving the child's other parent is also discussed, with safety issues and the impact for the child considered carefully. Assessment is comprehensive, covering issues around the nature and level of parental conflict, how the parents are managing the tasks of parenting and meeting their children's needs, perceptions of the child's relationships with each parent, how the child has responded to the separation, what supports the family and the child have, and what risk factors might be present for both the child and the parents. Children's participation in either a group program or individual counselling is determined on the basis of this assessment.

The group work program is based on Worden's (2003) grief model which asserts that the grief process involves four tasks (accepting the loss; expressing the pain; adjusting to living with the loss; and creating new meaning) and Wallerstein's (1996) research on children and separation which sets 6 tasks for children experiencing separation and divorce (resolving self-blame and understanding what factors cause family division; overcoming a sense of loss; acknowledging the permanence of the separation; alleviating anger; resuming developmental agendas at school and with friends; and developing hope and confidence).

Two children's groups run each school term, one for 5 - 8 year olds (with a maximum of 8 participants), and one for 9 - 12 year olds (with a maximum of 10 participants), each group focusing on different developmental needs. The groups run for 6 weeks from 4:30 - 6:00 after school. Each group has two facilitators with psychology or social work backgrounds and experience in working with children.

The group does not aim to resolve all issues, but to help children to respond to the changes in their family and move into the future in ways that are helpful to their development and well-being. The focus is on specific issues in ways that are fun for the children and which help them to feel safe and comfortable. This can include games, painting, clay work, and puppets, as well as talking.

Parental Involvement and Feedback

Unless there are safety issues indicating otherwise, both parents are contacted. Anglicare WA believes it is preferable for both parents to be aware of the group and to be supportive of their child's attendance.

Parents can be involved in the group in the following ways:

- Attendance at an initial intake session
- Participating in a parent and child group orientation session
- Children have take home activity sheets which they can share with parents if they wish
- Attendance for a short period at the end of the last session when children receive their certificates of attendance and have a celebratory afternoon tea
- Group feedback and discussion session for parents
- Individual feedback session with parent(s) and child following the group, or with parent(s) without children present.

Where there is parental conflict which is stressful for the child, only one parent is able to attend the parent segments in the group. However, the other parent is welcome to attend a separate feedback session with their child following the group. The children are always consulted regarding the ways in which they would like their parents to be involved and about the nature of feedback given to parents at the group feedback and discussion session for parents.

Parents are provided with printed information that explains issues around children's grief and how they express it; their needs following separation; and suggestions for ways that parents can support their children through their grief and issues arising from parental conflict.

Parents' feedback and discussion session

This session is for parents without children being present. It is held between Sessions 5 and 6 of the children's group, so as to allow children the opportunity to debrief in Session 6.

At the end of each of the sessions 1 – 5, the children are asked if there is any feedback about the issues raised in the session that they would like the facilitators to pass onto the parents at the parents' feedback session. In Session 5, this feedback is reviewed by the children and is presented by the facilitators to the parents in the form of general opinions and concerns of the group as a whole rather than as specific comments from particular children. Group drawings or craftwork may be presented as part of the feedback.

The facilitators support parents in discussing the feedback and developing ways to respond sensitively to their children's experiences and to continue to create the space to be open and responsive to the effects of their separation and conflict on their children.

Group Session Outlines

Each session starts with a warm-up activity and there is a break mid-way through the session with a drink and fruit. While the topics to be covered each week are the same for each age group, the activities used to address the topics might change to fit more appropriately with the ages of the child participants. Sessions cover the following topics:

Session 1 - Change and Stress

Session 2 – Why Change Happens

Session 3 – Grief and sadness

Session 4 – More Feelings - anger

Session 5 – Coping stations

Session 6 – Stepping into the Future

A Change Wizards children's book is in the process of being developed as a creative and fun resource for children to use in the group, to take home in between sessions and to continue using after the group has finished. The book includes input and advice from children for children.

Group Follow-up

Where issues of concern are identified during the group, children can continue with up to 4 individual or family counselling sessions, or can be referred to a Family Relationship Services Program or to other appropriate services.

Evaluation

Recently, we contacted 13 children who had attended Anglicare WA's *Change Wizards* program and asked them about their experiences. The children participated in telephone interviews of about 30 minutes' duration. The interview schedule asked nine questions pertaining to the children's experience; for example, what did the children do in groups, how did they feel, what was helpful and what was not. Results of this study will be published later in 2006, but overall the responses from the children were very positive. Amongst other responses, the children said:

*I was a bit nervous at first but then after we got there it got better
and it got fun*

Girl, 10 years old

*I think that I was a bit worried before we got there and then,
I think I remember that I thought that it was really good and
that everyone was really nice. I think that I liked it lots and that it
was good to go.*

Girl, 10 years old

*We met the other kids. There were only two kids, and that was good.
They are cool and are our friends now*

Boy, 9 years old

*I was a bit worried cause I didn't want to be around lots of other kids
that I didn't know. That would be a bit scary..... I didn't think I
would get to be with my brother but I was, so that was okay.*

Boy, 9 years old

I didn't know anyone except for my brother. We got to sit with a pillow in a group, so it was good to have my brother to sit with then.

Girl, 11 years old

I really liked it a lot I think. I met new friends there, they were cool. That was cool stuff too. And we all went away just before and that was cool too. That was with our new friends.

Boy, 7 years old

I think it did help a bit. It helped me with understanding, to understand my feelings better I think

Girl, 11 years old

It helped a lot I think. I think that counselling is a good thing. It gave me a chance to talk about my problems and to talk about how I felt which is important

Girl, 10 years old

Child Inclusive Mediation Practice

In Australia, 'child inclusive practice' was first researched in 1996 (McIntosh, 2000). The results of that research led to the establishment of a mediation process that separated children from their parents' mediation work. Australian child inclusive practice typically involves the child talking with a 'child counsellor' separately from her or his parents and the counsellor subsequently providing feedback to the parents about the child's concerns, views and wishes in a mediation session where the child is not present. It is argued that this process protects children from possible negative effects of having to confront their parents with 'sensitive' issues. Parents can hear these issues and deal with them before they reunite with the children, thus keeping the children away from possible conflicts associated with what they have said.

From a postmodernist viewpoint, language is a central agent in discourse and an active force that shapes experience by providing meaning to the observed world (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000). The narratives and stories we use construct a web of meanings and practices that explain and define who we are and how we fit in society. The way in which the English language refers to children is of interest in this respect for several reasons. First, English uses the terms 'my', 'our' and 'their' to refer to relationships between people: 'my partner', 'my wife/husband'; 'our children'. These words are also used to denote ownership of objects within our worlds: 'my car'; 'our house', for example. When we refer to other people (including children) as 'belonging' to us, the words imply strong proprietary attitudes towards them. This in itself does not indicate a different attitude towards children as against adults, but when taken with other examples of how language is used to describe children, there emerges a strong perception of children as powerless in certain situations relative to their adult counterparts. The literature on children's rights, for example, discusses issues in relation to 'bestowing' or 'giving' rights to children (Freeman, 1983; McLean, 2001; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating, 1998; Wringe, 1981). The use of these words implies that 'rights' are tangible objects that can be handed to children. The power base that underlies the use of words such as 'bestow' lies with adults, who control the distribution of rights to others such as children.

Studies of the history of childhood also indicate that language has been used to establish differences between children and adults. During the Middle Ages, for example, the term 'child' was used in a general fashion, to describe those in somewhat subservient positions, such as soldiers, employees and servants, with no specific distinction being made in its use. While there was a view of 'infants' as distinct from 'adults', there were no identified individuals between these two extremes (Stone, 1982), and those who were called 'children' were seen as 'fun' and 'playful', rather like the family pet, and not to be taken seriously (Aries, 1962). Since then, children have been described variously as a *tabula rasa* or blank slate (Rousseau, 1955), as having been born of original sin (Hendrick, 1990), as innocent and in need of strong protection (Kitzinger, 1990) and as incompetent and unable to understand 'adult' concepts until they achieve a high level of cognitive functioning (Piaget, 1969). From a postmodern perspective, all of these different conceptions of children sit alongside each other even today, creating a 'history of the present' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000). This is true of Australian society, where the social position of children is still perceived as somewhat different from that of their adult counterparts. When families separate, these differences are highlighted, invoking professional concerns about protection of children from the stresses of the experience and removal of them from their parents' conflict (Campbell, 2004).

Nevertheless, over the past ten years, Australian family services organisations have developed a significant focus on 'child inclusive' and 'child focused' practice, partly in response to the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which Australia ratified in 1990. Child inclusive practices are aimed at helping children to participate in decisions that directly affect them as well as providing them with some kind of forum for their voices to be heard in other matters, such as the ways in which they deal with their parents' separation and conflict. In contrast, child focused practices help parents, in the absence of their children's direct opinions, to concentrate on the children's best interests and needs. The aim is to ensure that our family practices become more sensitive to children and their needs and build participatory approaches that are considerate of these needs.

There is a difficulty with the language used to meet this aim, however. The terms 'child inclusive' and 'child focused' imply that children need special attention separate from adults; that in fact the practice of including and focusing on children is not the 'normal' approach to our work. We don't, for example, discuss 'parent (or grandparent) inclusive' or 'parent focused' practice in the same way as a child focus is discussed. Nor, apparently, have Australian family counsellors and mediators considered children to be direct clients of their services. This became evident following a series of workshops around the country in 2001, after which Mackay (2001) reported that practitioners made comments such as "...only those comfortable to engage with children should undertake [to work with them]" (p. v), "The child is not usually 'the customer'" (p. 19) and "Children should be allowed to be children" (p. 20). These statements reflect historical understandings about children and their place in society that both colour adult interactions with them and construct children as somehow different from adults.

It seems that in most family services organisations in Australia, 'child inclusive practice' is aimed at providing children with a restricted voice, in the sense that the majority of mediation and counselling is done directly with parents who hear from a third person (a 'child counsellor') about the children's views where possible. Children are thus kept away from direct involvement in their parents' discussions, talking instead with a counsellor who feeds back what the child agrees that the parents should hear. While this approach has yielded positive results for both children and parents (see, for example, McIntosh, 2000), there is an ever-present danger that the child counsellor can misinterpret or misrepresent the child's opinions. As Lee (2001, p. 10) argues, "The more one is in a position to make decisions for children, to speak on their behalf, the more one is able to silence their voices". Sometimes, that silencing can occur with the best of intentions, especially when the adult counsellor concludes that it might be in some way detrimental to the child for her or his opinions to be aired. Nevertheless, it can be argued that when a counsellor, for reasons of protecting a child, withholds information that the child has consented to be shared, the child's right to be heard is infringed.

At Anglicare in Western Australia, we struggle with these concepts on a daily basis. Practitioners are faced with decisions about whether to invite children to participate in the work with their parents and whether through that participation the children's opinions will be heard by the parents. Assessment is, of course, vital in reaching a decision about how to work with the family and whether the children will participate. Sometimes, mediators and counsellors will assess parents as being closed to their children's opinions and will consider that children may be further stressed by participating. On other occasions, parents themselves will reject an invitation for children to be involved and our staff will not pursue the issue. Sometimes, too, staff will assess the children as being so fearful or traumatised by their parents' conflict to render their participation as potentially significantly damaging for them. In so doing, however, we sometimes walk a fine line between constructing children as highly vulnerable and incapable of expressing their opinions, on the one hand, and nevertheless having a right to be heard in matters that directly affect them on the other. Beneath this fine line is a continuum of approaches that we can use, from complete removal of children from involvement in these issues through to complete inclusion. The way we construct children through the language we use about them can determine where on this continuum of approaches we will fall in any particular case with which we work.

Recently, a family was referred to our mediation service for assistance to decide on the future residence and contact for a 10-year-old boy, the family's only child. The boy, whom I will call Shaun, was currently residing with his mother, Simone¹, and seeing his father, Robert, on alternate weekends. This arrangement had worked satisfactorily for over a year, until, following two arguments with his father, Shaun announced that he no longer wanted to stay with him overnight. Robert expressed disappointment with Shaun's announcement but argued that the child was only 10 and therefore shouldn't be able to make this decision. Moreover, Robert argued that Shaun's wish not to stay overnight wasn't his wish at all, but Simone's, who had been influencing Shaun and turning him against his father. Simone felt affronted about this accusation and asked for an opportunity to talk with Robert to try to reach an understanding that would resolve these issues and respect Shaun's concerns.

As part of the assessment process, Shaun was invited to talk with one of our child counsellors. During that discussion Shaun said that he would appreciate the opportunity to talk directly with his parents. The child counsellor (Sally) suggested to Shaun that she could see if that was possible, but asked, if it was not, would Shaun agree to Sally talking with his parents on his behalf (using the generally accepted child inclusive approach currently in practice in Australia). Shaun replied that he didn't trust that his father would believe anyone else and that he thought that Robert needed to hear from Shaun directly. He then asked whether it would be possible for us to set up a 'walkie-talkie' set in the room where his parents would be working with another set in a room where Shaun could listen in. Then, when he wanted to say something, he could talk into the set in front of him. If that wasn't possible, Shaun wondered whether he could be in one room with his parents in another and the mediator going between the rooms to relay the discussion back and forth. In other words, 10-year-old Shaun had thought through and described all the usual forms of mediation practice, and had considered his own involvement in them. After this meeting with the child counsellor, we discussed Shaun's responses and agreed that it was important to respect Shaun's requests. If it was at all possible, we thought we should invite him to work with his parents in mediation from the beginning.

This decision, however, caused some concern amongst us. Robert had already said that he did not trust that Shaun knew his own needs; indeed, as far as Robert was concerned, Shaun was only repeating what his mother had 'fed' him. Our worry was that when Shaun met together with his parents, Robert would continue not to hear what Shaun had to say and that Shaun would become more stressed as a result. Additionally, we were concerned that Robert's belief that Simone was 'working on' Shaun might become more entrenched as a result of this meeting, thus increasing the conflict between the parents and leading to a

deterioration in their relationship. This deterioration could then have adverse effects on Shaun's relationship with his father. Finally, we worried that in inviting Shaun to work with us we might be giving him too much power in the process by elevating him to the decision-making parent sub-system.

On the other hand, there was already conflict between these parents and Shaun was aware of it. He also knew that his father had so far rejected Shaun's views as his own, rather than his mother's, and would perhaps be resilient enough to cope with further rejection if that occurred. We constructed Shaun as an integral part of his family and as a client of our service in his own right; we concluded that even if his father rejected what he said in a joint meeting, Shaun's right to state his opinions should be upheld.

Before we met with the family as a whole, however, we decided that I (Alan Campbell), as one of the mediators involved in the case, should meet with Shaun and the child counsellor. At that meeting we pointed out to Shaun that his father might still reject what Shaun had to say and might, indeed, become more entrenched in his thinking that Shaun's mother was putting him up to say the things he was saying. We asked how Shaun would feel if that happened and what he could do about it if it did. Shaun replied that his father had so far not listened to his views and if that continued in the mediation he would simply ask him, "What did I just say?" If his father couldn't answer him, Shaun said, he would just leave the meeting.

When asked what he needed from the mediation, Shaun replied that he wanted his father to "stop telling lies" and to tell Shaun in advance what he had planned for the weekends during which Shaun visited him. Shaun also said that he didn't want to refuse weekend visits with his father, but that he wanted advance information about what was going to happen on the weekends during which he stayed with him. Additionally, he wanted the right (his word) to say "No" to a planned weekend with his father. When I suggested that some adults would think that to give children that right would be giving them too much power, Shaun said that he thought it fair that he be able to refuse a weekend with his father if he felt that he had been wrongly treated during his last visit, or if he thought the planned activities would bore him (having already experienced weekends like this). He said that he thought that 8 and 9 year olds should have the same right, though he qualified that for 8 year olds, depending on the issues facing them.

Four days after our meeting with Shaun, we met with Shaun and his parents in a two-hour mediation session. Though it was tiring for all of us, especially for Shaun, he remained involved throughout. We began by asking Shaun what he'd like to address first, and, with Sally's help, he described how he often felt stuck in the middle of his parents' arguments. The session progressed from there and the parents were able to reach a few agreements about some of Shaun's issues. We are continuing the work with this family (June 2006), next meeting with Shaun and his father before meeting with both parents without Shaun present. We expect that most of the family's issues will be resolved in these two sessions.

What have we learned?

- Sometimes it is important for children to hear from their parents about what is happening. Shaun said during the session that he had thought that the communication difficulties between his parents were solely due to his father. He now knows that both parents are responsible for their communication breakdowns.
- When children are involved in family work, it's important to keep a close focus on their issues. During the session, we began to focus on ways to improve the parents' relationship. Shaun became fidgety during this discussion because the focus had moved from his issues (though our discussion was triggered by an issue he raised). We also realised that the parents' relationship was their business, not Shaun's. When we returned to a focus on his concerns he became involved again.

- It's important to clarify differences between children's understandings and those of adults. Robert had taken Shaun to an adults' party, which he described as "fun". Shaun rolled his eyes and replied, "Dad, it was *boring!*" We were then able to discuss the differences between children's and adults' 'worlds', thus facilitating new understandings for both participants.
- Comprehensive assessment of family members' suitability for this approach is *essential*. Not every family will be able to work in this way. Children should be articulate and hold a degree of personal power that is both encouraged and respected by parents.

The rewards, however, seem significant. Parents and children can all gain a greater understanding of each other and the various needs of each. This can lead to significant improvements in family relationships.

Working in this way, though, requires a 'new' construction of the language used to describe the work. Rather than being 'child inclusive', this work brings children back into families, with no distinction between them and their parents. The term 'family practice' takes on an inclusive meaning when applied to this approach. We would encourage all family services practitioners to consider substituting this term for those that single out children, and to embrace the possibility of inviting children to work as integral members of their families rather than separately from their parents.

References

- Amato, P. (1993). Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypotheses, and empirical support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55: 23-38.
- Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of childhood*. London: Cope.
- Buchanan, CM, Maccoby, EE and Dornbusch, SM. (1991) Caught between parents: Adolescents' experience in divorced homes. *Child Development* 62(5): 1008-1030.
- Campbell, A. (2004). *The voice of the child in family law: Who's right? Whose right?* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of South Australia, Australia.
- Campbell, A. (2005). *Mums and Dads Forever facilitator training manual*. Perth: Anglicare WA and Commonwealth of Australia.
- Danaher, G, Schirato, T and Webb, J (2000). *Understanding Foucault*. St Leonards NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Dozier, BS, Sollie, DL, Stack, SJ, and Smith, TA (1993) The effects of postdivorce attachment on coparenting relationships *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 19(3/4):109-123.
- Freeman, MDA (1983). *The rights and wrongs of children*. London: Frances Pinter.
- Hendrick, H (1990). 'Constructions and reconstructions of British childhood: An interpretive survey, 1800 to the present' in A James & A Prout (Eds.) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Falmer Press.
- Kitzinger, J (1990). 'Who are you kidding? Children, power, and the struggle against sexual abuse' in A James & A Prout (Eds.) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press.
- Lamb ME, Sternberg, KJ and Thompson, RA. (1997). The effects of divorce and custody arrangements on children's behavior, development, and adjustment. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* 35(4): 393-405.
- Lee, N (2001) *Childhood and society: growing up in an age of uncertainty*. Ballmoor, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Maccoby, EE, Depner, CE and Mnookin, RH (1990). Coparenting in the second year after divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52(1): 141-155.
- Mackay, M (2001) *Through a child's eyes: Child inclusive practice in family relationship services*. Canberra: Department of Family and Community Services and the Attorney-General's Department.
- McLean, C (2001). Give kids a voice in court. *Alberta Newsmagazine*, 28(13): 26 - 28.
- McIntosh, J (2000). Child inclusive divorce mediation: Report on a qualitative research study. *Mediation Quarterly*, 18(1): 55 - 69.
- Piaget, J (1969). *Psychology of intelligence*. Totowa, N. J: Littlefield, Adams.

Rousseau, JJ (1955). *Emile*. London: Dent, Everyman's Library.

Ruck, MD, Abramovitch, R and Keating, DP (1998). Children's and adolescents' understandings of rights: Balancing nurturance and self-determination. *Child Development* 64(2): 404-417.

Stone, GP (1982). 'The play of little children' in C Jenks (Ed.) *The sociology of children: Essential readings*. London: Batsford.

Wallerstein, JS & Blakeslee, S (1996). *Second chances: men, women, and children a decade after divorce*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin.

Whiteside, MF (1998) Custody for children age five and younger. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* 36(4): 479-503

Worden, JW (2003). *Grief counselling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner*. Hove, East Sussex : Brunner-Routledge.

Wringe, CA (1981). *Children's rights: A philosophical study*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ⁱ Names of family members have been changed to preserve confidentiality