

# Transition to Parenthood: findings from international research

Online Course - \$200

Bi-monthly – next starting: March 2014

*You can do the course at your own pace if that were more convenient*

Dr Joan Garvan (ANU)

[www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com](http://www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com)



MidPLUS



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**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**

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According to Barbara Pocock our era is characterized by a 'work-family clash' and Anne Summers believes we have reached the 'end of equality'. The TtoP research shows high levels of depression, high levels of marital dissatisfaction and there are legendary issues related to identity for women-as-mothers across the industrialized world. In 2004 the Department of Family and Community Services identified the Transition to Parenthood (TtoP) as a key focus area for the information needs of parents and after an extensive eight country study (both qualitative and quantitative) the European Commission (Lewis and Smithson 2006, 13)<sup>1</sup> identified the TtoP as a 'critical tipping point on the road to gender equity'. Yet surprisingly little research has been done in Australia. In the face of significant social change that is accompanied by attempts by the vast majority of couples to achieve a form of gender equal or egalitarian family health services are struggling to respond. These services across Australia are patchy and there are moves towards a national framework for universal programs. There is much work taking place within the Humanities that is highly relevant to practitioners who are working with women and families.

This three session course will focus on research findings on the Transition to Parenthood and Perinatal Depression along with introduction to contemporary literature on being a mother. Through online discussion participants will engage with topics that arise from the course content while maintaining a dialogue about program development and practical outcomes. The course will be of interest to practitioners such as Midwives, Family and Child Health Nurses, Doulas, Psychologists, GPs or Social Workers who are working with women and families, as well as Health Policy Officers. The course content has been informed by research in

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Suzan and Janet Smithson (ed). 2006. *Gender, Parenthood and the Changing European Workplace: Young adults negotiating work-family boundaries* TRANSITIONS. European Commission: Brussels.

my doctoral thesis, while I strive to remain connected to contemporary developments. The course has been designed to work in the gap between the academic discourse and the knowledge base that practitioners have accumulated through their work experience; the course will promote this kind of dialogue.

## Outline

This course runs over **THREE** fortnightly sessions. We will consider the social and cultural context of birth and early parenting. The course provides an overview of findings from research on the Transition to Parenthood and Perinatal Depression along with an ever expanding body of material on being a mum. The course content includes an introduction to current programs relevant to the early years after the birth of an infant.

There will be an online forum for discussion of topics that arise from the course content while considering practical outcomes. Through a combination of materials drawn from Bibliographies (available to participants) and presented in the form of PowerPoint sessions, respondents will be provided with an introduction to the literature and an overview of this perspective on Maternal Health. Participants will be provided with an updated bibliography on this related research.

The sessions will be held on a fortnightly basis so as to give participants time to view the online lecture, do some reading, participate in the discussion, and attend to assessment items. The topics covered in this certificate course are:

- Session 1** This will be an introductory overview of the course content with links to programs relevant to the early years after the birth of an infant that will feed into continuing discussions on practical outcomes. Participants will be invited to critically reflect on the current services and to think about proposals for programs that might be developed in response to issues raised.
- Session 2** Introductory overview of themes arising from an international body of work on the Transition to Parenthood along with Australian research on Perinatal Depression. Long term researchers on the family, Philip and Carol Cowan, identified four key features of the TtoP. These are: changes to the sense of self, changes to life course, changes to relationships (husband/partner, family and friends), and negotiating more housework. My thesis expanded on these and included focus on 'finding a line between self and baby'.
- Session 3** This session reviews themes covered so far and introduces an ever expanding body of material on being a mother drawing from selected texts such as: *The Myths of Motherhood*; *Naked Motherhood*; *The Mother Knot*; *Of Woman Born*; *Do Men Mother*; *Maternal Desire*, *The Motherload* and more. These are perspectives that can inform practitioner's everyday work and where relevant be passed on to clientele.

## Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this Professional Development course participants will be able to:

1. Identify key issues associated with the Transition to Parenthood (TtoP);
2. Refer to Australian research on Perinatal Depression and anxiety, along with a significant international body of research on the TtoP;
3. Access a significant genre of literature, philosophy and self-help books on 'becoming a mother';

In order to attain the certificate for the course, participants will be asked to submit:

- \* A 200-250 word comment on the discussion site relevant to the theme at hand each fortnight;
- \* A 1-2 page draft proposal for a program that responds to issues raised during the course;

There are numerous articles and texts set out on my internet site at: [www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com](http://www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com) you may like to dip into some of these resources. Once participants register for the course I will send an invitation to join the relevant site and from here respondents can access further information on programs, bibliographies and associated documents.

**Cost:** I am offering this course at \$200. I will be asking for feedback both on the content and on practical outcomes.

On successful completion of the course I will issue a certificate of participation.

## Dr Joan Garvan

Joan's research is in Sociology and Gender. In December 2010 Joan was awarded a doctorate from the Australian National University and her thesis was titled: *Maternal Ambivalence in contemporary Australia: navigating equity and care*. Since completing her studies Joan launched an internet site at: [www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com](http://www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com) She has four years' experience working with the Australian National University as an Online Moderator for a unit on Gender and Development. This is an elective for a Masters of Participatory Anthropology. Joan has completed a semester with the Australian Catholic University as a Lecturer on Introduction to Sociology. She has presented papers at a dozen conferences, including the Australian Institute for Family Studies, the Australian Sociology Association, and the Association for Research on Mothering at Queensland University, York University in Toronto, and in New York. Joan also presented a paper at an Insight Forum organised by Women's & Children's Healthcare Australasia. She completed a Master of Arts, in Women's Studies and Human Geography in the early 1990s and has worked with both the Asia Partnership for Human Development and Australian Council for Overseas Aid. Joan was both a mature aged student and a mature aged mum and her children have now blossomed into teenagers.

The course will be run via the Wikispaces site. This is well used by schools and educational institutions and boasts 13 million members. You will need to register with Wikispaces which is free. I have set up an Introductory PowerPoint so you can get a feel for the site and test out the process see: <http://beyondtheclinical.wikispaces.com/> Please test out the Wikispaces site and the Introductory PowerPoint before registering and - send me an email, give me a call, or arrange for me to ring you if you would like further information. I have set-up a PayPal facility so you can make a secure payment online and or you can use

direct debit. Send me your details if you are enrolling and I will get back to you with an enrolment form and any further details.

You will need to have access to broadband so that you can freely view the PowerPoint. This is set up in Microsoft Word – which can be accessed using Word 2003 up to 2010 (compatible Apple computers can also access the documents). If you are in doubt let me know and I will send you a document as an email attachment so you can test it out.

I have uploaded key documents, articles and links to the wikispaces site and I won't set any compulsory reading for articles that are difficult to attain. You will be advantaged if you have access to a library with the facility to search journals and provide the pdf for articles. As you will see from much of the material on my internet site I have only been able to include the abstract (OR otherwise the pdf if it is freely available). You can access some journals via the National Library of Australia internet site and find some of the books on their shelves. This is something I will work through as the course proceeds.

There are an endless supply of books available via amazon. I have bought much of my library through this site. Many of these books have been available for less than \$20 and more recently the cost for postage has been \$18. Courses begin on a bi-monthly basis or otherwise more frequently if there is a demand. For commencement dates check [www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com](http://www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com) email me at [garvanjoan@gmail.com](mailto:garvanjoan@gmail.com) or ring (02) 6161 6068.