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## Using Child Development Research to Make Appropriate Custody and Access Decisions for Young Children

### The MISREPRESENTATIONS of MICHAEL LAMB and JOAN KELLY

The [below article](#), published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, [AFCC](#), and similar articles by these co-authors and disciples, seems to be cited these days just about every time some custody evaluator wants to throw a baby or toddler into joint custody as if speculative agenda-driven hypotheses constitute research findings. They don't. This -- as well as the numerous articles like it -- is an opinion piece. Its arguments are misleading, self-serving, unsupported political rhetoric. Its recommendations are merely ideas. And bad ones.

**No research whatsoever has established benefits to accrue to any child from any of the custody recommendations set forth here under the pretext that they are based on child development research.** The efficacy of the ideas themselves in implementation has not been researched.

Research findings such as Lamb's of such readily obvious facts such as that human beings can and do form multiple attachments are distorted and twisted into recommendations based on an unsupported assumption that children "should" form specific attachments to specific persons.

09/21/08 interview: Lamb admits fatherlessness is "not really a risk... The evidence, on the whole, hasn't supported that... It's about the relationship with the [custodial] parent, how much support, how harmonious is the environment..."

Findings that fathers "could" do this or that or become primary parents are distorted into recommendations based on other, unsupported and logically invalid conclusions from those premises, such as that both parents "are" or "should be" equal attachment figures to children.

Findings about fathers from studies of loving, mutually interactive couples in intact marriages are irrationally applied to nonresident fathers, including never-married fathers, with unknown different characteristics who do not have any positive -- or even any family -- relationships with mothers and children.

Broad demographic studies of the flexible and ill-defined "fatherless homes" populations, which indicate complex and multi-causated reasons for the (actually small) negative outcomes suffered by a minority of children in these "single mother home" groups are twisted, baselessly, into the political rhetoric that children "need" or "benefit" from having two parents. **The notion is completely unsupported.**

12/15/11: "Prior to the age of two years, overnight time away from the primary caregiver should be avoided" say new Australian custody guidelines per infant wellbeing research.  
contact sarah@argate.net if link to this article becomes unavailable

If, e.g., children are shown to benefit from being raised in homes with higher financial resources, then what children arguably "need" are those financial resources, not any particular method of achieving them.

Research indicating that children suffer from disrupted attachments is misrepresented as support for the unsupported notion that nonexistent or poor attachments "should" be developed, and in the assumptions that children are suffering from separation anxiety of broken secondary attachments when in the placement of their primary attachment figures. Completely unsupported.

Articles such as these are not even properly promoted to the category of custody "literature."

They are fathers' rights arguments with wish lists of shoulds, sanctioned and promulgated by professionals who are, in my opinion, abusing their perceived statuses as "scientists" to move social policy for ulterior reasons.

**Applied in practice, the recommendations constitute treatment protocols designed to remedy a nonexistent psychological problem.** When implemented based in

whole or in part on the recommendations of a mental health practitioner, these become experimental psychological interventions challengeable as such because they are designed to accomplish an unethical and inappropriate purpose -- what in actuality are political or legal demands unrelated to child well-being. These demands are psychologically justified by the pure speculation that a lack of nonresidential father primary parenting "equality" in turn "may" prevent possible future father "absence" that in turn "may" cause an increased future risk of some kind of unestablished psychological problems for the child. Such problems are, in any event, statistically unlikely to develop (but this is not mentioned). No research establishes any premise in the flawed reasoning. Also implied in the distortion of terminology of attachment research is that it is possible, oxymoronically, to create two primary attachments. Simultaneously, the proponents of this purported prophylactic speciously explain away or argue for ignoring tangible evidence of actual current harms being inflicted on the child as well as developing iatrogenic effects, and in a defiance of logic reminiscent of theological arguments, insist that the burden falls on the other side to counter their unsupported beliefs.

09/02/08: Study Links Gene Variant in Men to Marital Discord - "Men with two copies of the allele had twice the risk of marital dysfunction... Wives of men with two copies of the allele reported lower levels of satisfaction, affection, cohesion and consensus."

These recommendations misrepresent science, are grounded in hypothesis rather than sound theory, are supported by no efficacy studies, fly in the face of established biological, anthropological, psychological, and sociological knowledge, and ignore or distort established research and other evidence that points the other way. Unfortunately, the blinders of personal desires and personal situations have made even individuals who ought to be able to tell the difference when reviewing "the literature" also dumb and deaf to reason. [liznote]

There is a difference between statements of fact that are supported by research findings and statements that are merely unsupported rhetoric following ideas with an agenda. Where this is done deliberately, I consider it to be no less a misrepresentation of the research than the misrepresentations in any other con that succeeds because it dangerously mixes truth with lies.

**I have reproduced Lamb and Kelly's entire essay on this webpage in [blue](#). My comments in [red](#) are interspersed right within the text of that article.**

Michael Lamb and Joan Kelly are prolific writers. Their opinion articles catering to the fatherhood promotion movement and to discussions of ostensible needs and solutions that advance the best interests of mental health professionals who seek opportunities to ply their trade in the justice system should not be confused with write-ups and analysis of actual findings of credible research. Unfortunately, too many persons just don't understand the difference, or the difference between a citation to research findings and a citation to yet another article with unsupported "ideas." Repeated often enough, ideas start to take on a life of their own until the citations are so far removed from any actual primary research or source of inquiry, that they achieve the status of presumptions upon which yet more faulty ideas are built. And so this article is being used to illustrate a problem that is all too common, particularly in the psychological "literature." [liznote]

## Using Child Development Research to Make Appropriate Custody and Access Decisions for Young Children

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Decisions regarding custody and access are most often made without reference to the research on child development, although this literature can be useful in conceptualizing children's needs after separation and divorce. Research on attachment processes, separation from attachment figures, and the roles of mothers and fathers in promoting psychosocial adjustment are reviewed in this article. It concludes with a discussion of the implications for young children's parenting schedules.

Powerful influences shape decisions about custody and access arrangements when parents are separating or divorcing. Regardless of whether parents make their decisions independently or rely on therapists, custody evaluators, or judges for recommendations and decisions, statutory, historical, and cultural forces often determine which care arrangements are deemed to be in the children's best interests (Kelly, 1994). Unfortunately, however, decision makers in family law and mental health fields remain largely ignorant about several decades of research on child development. Child development researchers and child custody decision makers rarely cross paths, and most of the relevant publications intended for academic audiences are inaccessible to casual readers.

In this article, we discuss research that directly helps conceptualize custody and access issues that need to be addressed when parents separate. Because so many questions arise regarding appropriate postseparation arrangements for infants and young children, the focus will be on attachment processes, separation from attachment figures, and the roles of mothers and fathers in promoting children's development. To facilitate readability, we primarily cite review articles; readers can study the cited articles for references to the primary literature.

Lamb commences claiming that he is going to review the research on child development as it pertains to custody decisions. In fact, he does not cite to one single actual research finding in this entire un-footnoted article, although he has written variations of this article in which he has done so -- which is not to say that the custody recommendations and best interests of children conclusions made in those articles necessarily follow from the cited research either. (They don't.) While a number of references are cited below in this article, few are to research and none are to findings; for the most part, the research referred or alluded to within this article, or within the articles cited at the end as "references" actually does not support Lamb and Kelly's conclusions in this essay. Also note that, conveniently, many of the citations are to "literature" by the very same authors of this essay, Lamb and Kelly (kind of like supporting one's hypotheses with citations to prior essays making the same hypotheses.)



Lamb, a well-known and credible researcher (although he has written soft papers like this article all too often since, apparently, being given [fatherhood promotion marching orders](#) from the federal government), squirrels out of being called on his sleight of hand by setting up as his precursor alibi, that he did this in this article in this way (without citation to supportive research findings) in order to "facilitate readability" and that "readers can study the cited articles for references to the primary literature." This is an incredible statement given that it follows directly after the observation that custody decision-makers in fact don't usually read the actual research! Perhaps they remain unintentionally ignorant because articles like this one, which has no research support for its main ideas, in turn is cited in other "literature" as "Lamb" -- a name which implies there is an on-point research finding underlying a footnoted statement, not just another article with more unsupported hypothesizing and political drip.

## RESEARCH ON ATTACHMENT PROCESSES

Over the past four decades, our understanding of early social and emotional development has improved enormously. In particular, psychologists have identified many of the factors that influence the formation of attachment relationships between infants and their parents, as well as the adverse effects on children of disrupted and distorted parent-child relationships (Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, in press; Lamb, Thompson, Gardner, & Charnov, 1995; Thompson, 1998). The essence of our emergent understanding of this phenomena is briefly summarized in the following pages.

Lamb's first reference is to research by Lamb. Lamb has done lots of research on parents who are fathers. His use of the word "parents" therefore is not noteworthy in this context. However, having set the stage to substitute the word "parents" for "mothers" and/or "fathers" in connection with "research" facilitates a less noticeable continuing substitution of the generic term for "mother" in connection with other research findings in which making that substitution would *not* be accurate.

Having in this way muddled the distinction (which Lamb himself does maintain throughout his own research), Lamb then makes the (now ostensibly valid) gender neutral substitution repeatedly through the rest of this essay, even where absolutely nothing in the research mentioned supports any conclusion that findings pertaining to "mothers" (or a child's primary caregiver) also would apply to "fathers" (or a child's secondary attachment, or nonresidential parent, or anyone else.) This is a deliberate use of the logical fallacy of equivocation to create a misleading impression. The above paragraph is, in essence, the setup for a con job. [\[liznote\]](#)

The development of attachments to parents and other important caregivers constitutes one of the most critical achievements of the 1st year of life. These enduring ties play essential formative roles in later social and emotional functioning.

"Other important caregivers"? Such as the babysitter? How special does this, then, make any particular attachment individually? Do they all play "essential" roles? This is a ploy to divert attention from the thrust of this article as, essentially, fathers rights promotion. The purpose of distorting the research from "mothers (primary attachment) and others" to "parents and others" is to elevate the father from a lower attachment status vis a vis the mother into a blurred equivalent status with the mother. In reality, there is a hierarchy of attachment statuses, and that hierarchy is not a simple "parents and others" -- even in intact homes. In nontraditional homes, infants' "secondary" attachment figures are as likely to be grandparents, siblings, and stepparents as the other biological parent.

Infant-parent attachments promote a sense of security, the beginnings of self-confidence, and the development of trust in other human beings. Concerned with the profoundly negative impact on children's development of prolonged separation from parents, Bowlby (1969) first proposed a theoretical explanation for the importance of continuity in relationships, drawing on psychoanalytic and ethological theory. Subsequent decades of research have focused on the phases and types of attachment: the security of attachments, the stability of attachments over time, the contributions of infants and caregivers to the quality or security of attachments, cultural differences in attachment outcomes, and later personality and cognitive characteristics associated with different types of attachment.

Bowlby's research was not on "parents." It was on MOTHERS, or perhaps primary caregiving mother substitutes. All of Bowlby's and other, consistent researchers' findings indicate that it is the attachment to the primary caregiver that is "crucially" important. No findings whatsoever indicate that children need more than the one attachment nature provided for.

The Multiple Meanings of "Equality" -- a case study in custody litigation, J. Gordon

Lest anyone notice the equivocation, or actually be familiar with established research on what children need as far as attachment relationships, Lamb provides a distraction, which might make the more casual reader think that perhaps he is referring to new research findings, perhaps even his own, to the effect that infants also "need" father attachments. But read the words carefully; he doesn't say this, and the research (including Lamb's own research on the possibilities and effects of infant-father attachments in intact homes) hasn't found this.

(And again note, the lack of an emphasis too strongly placed on fathers, i.e. "nonfamily caregivers," helps lend an impression that this article is objective, and not really the father's rights political piece that it is, as it gently transitions directly into that agenda, which comes

out further below. This is propaganda.)

Researchers initially focused exclusively on infant-mother attachment, and that literature is best known in the mental health community. In the past 20 years, however, the meaning and importance of infant-father attachments and of attachments to nonfamily caregivers in day care and preschool settings have been studied extensively as well (for detailed reviews, see Lamb, 1997a, 1998; Thompson, 1998).

Note that "the meaning and importance of infant-father attachments" has "been studied" but apparently, Lamb couldn't even throw in a couple of examples of findings indicating that such attachments either are comparable to mother caregiver attachments or that babies require father caregivers. If Lamb had even one -- even one -- "for example" one would think he would have put it here. But there isn't one. Not one finding. And so there is much ado about "studying" to allow the misleading replacement in discussions of attachment of findings pertaining to "mothers" as research about "parents."

## PHASES OF ATTACHMENT FORMATION

Attachment formation involves reciprocal interactive processes that foster the infant's growing discrimination of parents or caregivers, as well as the emotional investment in these caregivers. Infants who receive sensitive and responsive care from familiar adults in the course of feeding, holding, talking, playing, soothing, and general proximity become securely attached to them (Thompson, 1998). Even adequate levels of responsive parenting foster the formation of infant-parent attachments, although some of these relationships may be insecure. Children are nonetheless better off with insecure attachments than they are without attachment relationships at all.

"Children are better off with insecure attachments than they are without attachment relationships at all." However, it would be better -- far better -- if children had secure attachments. Not mentioning this, but mentioning the relative virtues of an insecure attachment versus the nearly impossible "no attachment" is a setup for the later arguments in this essay in favor of facilitating insecure attachments instead of "no attachments" to non-primary caregivers. The importance of "secure attachment" is sloughed over because mentioning that would emphasize the irrelevancy of machinations seeking to foster even insecure attachments to anyone else when the child already has one secure attachment to its primary caregiver and no need of that. Moreover, the implication that it might be okay, or even better, for a baby to have multiple insecure attachments -- a reasonable conclusion in the absence of mentioning the value of an infant's being securely attached to the primary caregiver -- is outright dangerous. Implying that quantity counts over quality permits the later shrug when joint custody results in an infant's having insecure attachment to the primary caregiver.

Bowlby (1969) described four phases of the attachment process, and subsequent research has largely confirmed this delineation: (a) indiscriminate social responsiveness, (b) discriminating sociability, (c) attachment, and (d) goal-corrected partnerships.

Bowlby studied infant-mother (or mother-substitute) attachments, and nothing in any subsequent research indicates that infants require more than one primary attachment, or that, if there are, collectively, important additional but lesser attachments, they even must be a "parent." Nature also provides siblings. Many societies historically have formed familial and communal living groups that do not include significant roles for biological fathers.

### Indiscriminate Social Responsiveness

During this phase, which occurs between birth and 2 months, the infant uses an innate repertoire of signals to bring caregivers to him or her, including crying and smiling. The child begins to associate the caregivers with relief of distress (from hunger or pain). Furthermore, adults' vocalizations and animated facial expressions create additional opportunities for social interaction. Although infants are able to



recognize their parents by voice or smell within the first weeks of life, they accept care from any caregiver during this phase without distress or anxiety (Lamb et al., in press).

More honestly written, the above would refer to "caregiver" in the singular, not "caregivers."

Infants recognize their own mothers' smells, and mothers' milk, almost immediately post-birth. Not that of their "parents." One would think the evolutionary norm was a hoard of adults being summoned by a single infant (all having milk let down to relieve that baby from hunger?) Mammalian infants in herd-oriented species (including primates) typically are cared for by only one adult at a time, with only short or intermittent relief for the mother, if at all.

Only in a few species or societies do biological sires assist in carrying or provisioning, but such hands-on caregiving behavior has not been recognized by anthropologists as typical in the human species. Rare male help would be more likely to come from an older nonadult male sibling in maternal-headed family groups with young at various stages of maturity. In fact the adult male in the overwhelming most of mammalian species is far more likely to be dangerous than nurturing. Mother "help" for humans as well as among other mammalian species is more effectively given performing other chores, such as provisioning for the nursing mother, or caregiving help for older children -- not infant care.

**See the research. The research in fact has found -- repeatedly -- that constantly changing caregivers is harmful to infants.** Lamb and Kelly's use of the plural "caregivers" (to include the unnecessary second adult, i.e. father) implies that the norm for infant development is something other than what has evolved over thousands of years, i.e. post-natal survival optimized for those infants who received the constant care and attention of their mothers or substitute breastfeeders. Lamb describes a misleading picture of child development as having evolved in accord with some kind of norm of a group of hovering "caregivers" -- male, female, unrelated other adults.

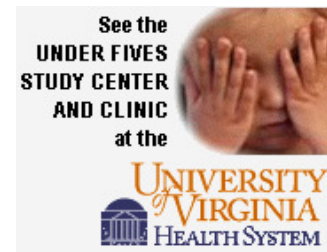
While infants indeed may accept care from any caregiver at this stage of life (do they have much choice?), passing newborns around among multiple caregivers is not the evolutionary history of human beings. Those babies died out in infancy from exposure to disease.

We have not overcome evolution in the two decades since the invention of joint custody parenting notions. Breastfeeding, and being carried by and kept close to their mothers (human infants don't cling like monkey babies to fur, but human females' arms, which are shaped differently from males' arms, are designed to hold objects easily to their chests) are what infants need and what their evolved responses are geared to obtaining. [[liznote](#)]

### Discriminating Sociability

Discriminating sociability occurs between 2 and 7 months of age. Here the infants begin to recognize certain caregivers and prefer interaction with them. Infants thus coo and soothe more readily in response to these familiar figures, orient their posture toward them, and show more pleasure when interacting with them. This attachment-in-the-making indicates that the caregivers' responses are sufficiently prompt and appropriate. During this phase, infants begin to learn reciprocity, a sense of effectiveness ("I can make things happen"), and trust. They generally do not protest when separated from their parents during this phase, but they become anxious if separated from humans for too long.

Not "caregivers" -- "mothers." If there is a continually present father or older caregiver child or nanny (mother-substitute) in the home, infants *also* will start to get to know and feel comfortable with and form secondary attachments to those persons. (Did we really need research to figure this out?)



However nothing -- absolutely nothing -- in any [research](#) by Lamb or anyone else has found that infants "need" more than one caregiver, that they do better with more than one caregiver, that they need a father any more than they need a grandmother or older brother, or that any of these secondary attachments, to the extent they do form, are of equal importance to an infant's having a strong and healthy bond with its primary caregiver mother. [\[liznote\]](#)

Moreover, nothing about the possibilities (the obvious outcomes) of having continually resident other adults who care for an infant in the home in which they live with the child's mother, offers anything of use for the purposes of nonresident parent custody cases.

## Attachment

In the attachment phase, which occurs between 7 and 24 months of age, the child, by actively seeking to remain near to preferred caregivers, gives increasingly clear evidence that attachments have been formed. Behaviors demonstrating attachment include differential following and clinging to parents, especially when tired or sick, and preferences for specific caretakers as secure bases for exploration of the environment.

Lamb (as well as other researchers) has found that in fact, infants will prefer their mothers if the mothers are one of the caregivers.

It's dishonest and it's misleading to use the term "caregivers" as if this distinction is not made. Of course (did it take research to figure out?) infants will prefer known secondary caregivers to complete strangers (especially the evolved fear most infants have of what would be dangerous strangers with facial hair). However, these secondary caregivers can be anyone. Nothing in any research indicates there is anything special about who they are, whether a father or an older sibling or a resident grandmother or an *au pair*. But **it's dishonest to lump all caregivers together as if they are a fungible group, implying the mother-infant attachment isn't of primacy.**

Somewhere around the middle of the 1st year of life, infants begin to cry or protest when separated from their attachment figures.

This is deliberately misleading. Infants generally do not cry and protest when being transferred to their primary attachment mothers, even if that means being separated from one of those other (plural) "attachment figures."

This transition marks the initial attainment of the ability to recognize that parents continue to exist when they are not present, an ability referred to by Piaget as object constancy. Of course, the understanding of this fundamental concept is quite rudimentary at first and continues to mature in the next year and a half of the child's life. As this comprehension matures, the child's ability to tolerate separation from humans grows, although separation does remain stressful for young children.

"Parents." "Attachment figures." "Humans." Note the rhetorical device. Infants' "mothers" fade and dissolve into an increasingly impersonal populace of undifferentiated anybodies.

Infants clearly cope better with separation from one attachment figure when they are with another attachment figure. Nevertheless, it is important to minimize the length of time that infants are separated from their attachment figures; extended separations unduly stress developing attachment relationships. If they are attached to both parents, as most infants are, this means that the length of time with each parent needs to be adjusted to minimize the length of time away from the other parent.

And, having repeatedly misrepresented research on infant-mother (I use "mother" here synonymously with mother-substitute or primary caregiver) attachment, as "parents" and "caregivers," implying that they are all equal (Lamb's own research has found otherwise), and making the completely misleading statement that "most infants" are attached to "both

parents" this ostensibly indicates... that children suffer separation issues from all kinds of human beings, that there is no particular qualitative differences between one of the "attachment figures" or another, that separation from one is like separation from another, and that all of this separation stress is ameliorated if the child simply is left with another fungible "attachment figure" aka here "the other parent."

**No research whatsoever has found that infants benefit when we increase their periods of separation from their primary attachment in order to allow them to spend more time with lesser attachment figures.** It's counterintuitive, it's illogical, and as a conclusion in this article is not supported by one single preceding statement or one single research finding, To the extent it's in this article to lead up to a conclusion that children need anything joint custody offers, it's a lie.

Considerable evidence now exists (for a review, see Lamb, 1997a) that documents that most infants form meaningful attachments to both of their parents at roughly the same age (b to 7 months).

"Meaningful" is not a quantitative or qualitative statement. Note that the implication or impression intended to be conveyed is that the attachment to the two parents is "equal" -- which is why the "same age" language is inserted in the sentence.

This is true even though many fathers in our culture spend less time with their infants than mothers do. This indicates that time spent interacting is not the only factor in the development of attachments, although some threshold of interaction is crucial.

(Squirm.) This is a tough one for the joint custody propagandists, because the research findings indicate that children do not need to spend more time with their fathers in order to maintain their levels of attachment with them. In fact, the evidence to date indicates that joint custody, particularly for babies and very young children, does not improve children's attachments with formerly resident fathers, but instead just disrupts their attachments with their mothers. See the [research](#).

Most infants come to "prefer" the parent who takes primary responsibility for their care (typically their mothers), but this does not mean that relationships with the other parent are unimportant. The preference for the primary caretaker appears to diminish with age, and by 18 months, this preference often has disappeared.

Deliberate misrepresentations. First, no one claims that (any) pre-existing attachment relationships children already have developed ought to be viewed as "unimportant."

But that's a long way from making the claim that all attachment relationships are of equal importance.

Lamb's research has found that in intact -- intact -- households (i.e. father loves mother and father is continually around and in residence) infants form meaningful attachments to both parents. Lamb did NOT find that these attachments were equal; in fact he found that when both parents were available, infants preferred their mothers. So have other researchers. Consistently.

Infants also form "meaningful attachments" to their siblings, grandparents, and others who might care for them as well. There is nothing special about fathers or fatherhood implied in this. These secondary relationships are not "unimportant" (assuming they naturally have developed and actually exist -- which may not be the case where parents did not reside together with the child for some period of time), but this does not imply that they are equivalent to the relationships infants have with their mothers, that these other relationships should be accorded the same deference as that one, that these other relationships are equally important or of any particular importance to children's development, that infants'



relationships with their mothers should be interfered with in order to develop these or any other secondary relationships, or that infants in fact have relationships of importance with men who are not co-resident with the infants' mothers or were but only present for a short time in a failing and conflictual marriage.

Second, no research indicates -- as implied -- that babies' preference for their primary caregivers likely is gone by 18 months (i.e. father ostensibly being "equal" by then -- "often" being a fudge word). The norm in the intact homes with loving mutually involved parents which Lamb studied is that at a point, closer to three years of age, children do form functionally equivalent but still qualitatively different attachments to both continuously resident, caregiving parents. However, most of the time the preference never completely disappears, especially in times of emotional need. Lamb's own research has confirmed that infants and small children usually will prefer their mothers (the identified primary caregiver) when both mothers and fathers are available.

Moreover, other research has shown that even adult children of divorced parents tend to have closer relationships with their mothers than with their fathers. It is only rarely that children lose their preference for their mothers or mother-substitute primary parent vis a vis any other adult.

[liznote]

In general, the ways in which mothers and fathers establish relationships with and influence their children's development is quite similar. Although much has been made of research showing that mothers and fathers have distinctive styles of interaction with their infants, the differences are actually quite small and do not appear to be formatively significant (Lamb, 1997a). The benefits of maintaining contact with both parents exceed any special need for relationships with male or female parents.

Whoa! What "benefits of maintaining contact with both parents"? This point has not been established, either in this paper or in any research. How'd he jump from "mothers and fathers influence their children in similar ways" to "benefits of maintaining contact with both parents"? The last sentence in this paragraph doesn't logically follow the precursors. The preceding sentences do not require or even imply the conclusion that fathers' and mothers' relationships are equivalent and fungible. Presented in this way, as if they were, is a bastardization of the research findings, which more accurately stated are as follows:

The benefits of maintaining children's existing attachments and existing relationships outweigh any claim that children need to have a particular relationship with any particular adult, any particular number of parents (if they currently are attached some other number, e.g. one), or another parent of a particular gender (if the primary parent is a different gender), etc.

And "maintaining" means "maintaining." Not "improving." Not "equalizing." There is, in other words, nothing in any research indicating, *inter alia*, that children need "fathers" if those relationships already have not been established, or anything in any research that suggests children benefit from anything more than to maintain those relationships they already have (if, presumably, these already are significant attachments -- not all are, e.g. the daycare worker from last year.)

And there is there nothing in any research that would indicate that any benefit accrues to children by "maintaining" lesser relationships at the expense of more significant ones.

Or that their primary attachment is not primary but merely a "relationship with a parent who (in the majority of cases) happens to be female."

All Lamb's research has found is that it is possible for a male to function as mother-substitute, and that who the "mother" is could be someone other than the mother (e.g. an adoption situation, or a widower father who raises a child from birth.) Lamb's research also has found

that children "can" form multiple attachments, secondary attachments. There is no research evidence that where both parents continuously have been present, these attachments are so equivalent in the very young child that determining primary attachment is impossible. In fact, Lamb has found the opposite, that when both parents are available, babies and small children prefer their mothers.

Lamb's research on secondary parents, moreover, was in intact homes. What fathers "could" do and what is possible or even naturally occurs in intact homes has no transportable value to nonresidential situations. No research findings have found a need to develop this relationship where it does not already exist. Nor does anything in the research indicate that a secondary attachment of any particular quality or strength is to be presumed where there has been something other than an intact home preceding a custody determination.

Lamb's deliberate confounding of research indicating the gender-neutrality aspects of who "could" theoretically become a primary parent with the implication that children receive benefits (*what* benefits?) from secondary relationships which exceed the children's need for noninterference with their relationships with their primary parent is contemptible.

No research ever has indicated this to be the case, including Lamb's own, and thus, the technically true but equivocating way this is stated above as "special need for relationships with male or female parents" is fraudulent. Lamb surely knows this will be read as denigrating mother relationships rather than -- as the research actually has found -- that children have no need at all for more than one parent much less for two parents with one of each sex, and that theoretically anyone including an adoptive gay guy mother substitute could be the child's primary parent.

The empirical literature also shows that infants and toddlers need regular interaction with both of their parents to foster and maintain their attachments (Lamb et al., in press).

(Empirical "literature"? What's that?)

What attachments, and which attachments. At the beginning of this article, there were all these "multiple attachment figures" that were discussed and described as "crucial." And that fathers' relationships with their children develop meaningfully even though "many fathers in our culture spend less time with their infants than mothers." Then, there is the statement that the way in which mothers and fathers form relationships with their children is quite similar, and a mischaracterization of the research findings. And now a jump -- that to maintain "their attachments" children need "regular interaction" with "both of their parents." How did we logically get from there to here? Equivocation.

The research indicates no such need for "regular interaction with both of their parents." In fact, with regard to non-primary relationships, it indicates the reverse. Lamb notes above that somehow babies form attachments to their fathers (and others) in intact homes even though fathers spend less time with the children than mothers do.

No research indicates that children need to "foster" or "strengthen" secondary relationships beyond what they already are. In addition, to the extent these do exist, and to the extent that they in fact are "attachment" relationships, the hallmark of attachment relationships is that they do endure and do not need such concerted, artificial maintenance. Do children stop loving grandparents when they don't see them twice a week? Of course not.

While fathers "could" become primary parents, and theoretically resident fathers also "could" form equal attachments, the reality is that in families with such problems that they have resulted in custody cases involving infants and very small children, it's extremely unlikely that these fathers have done so. To the extent they actually exist, these still are not children's primary attachments, directly affecting children's security and well-being. Just as all those

other "attachment relationships" referred to over and over above in Lamb's article, these are less interdependent, more social attachments, freer to form and also more likely to form, when there is a solid, secure primary attachment relationship. The research on disrupted attachments speaks to the disruption of that attachment, the one which nature provided for the mammalian child. And the strength of that relationship also enhances the secondary relationships children have with others.

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Having laid the above misleading and fraudulent groundwork, giving the appearance of having been an analysis of supporting research leading up to conclusions, at this point Kelly and Lamb's article veers into completely unsupported joint custody fathers' rights propaganda, although purporting to continue to be an article discussing stages of development. (Further down, Kelly gets delusional altogether with a panoply of various detailed custody ideas and conclusions, not a single one of which is based on any research -- or even a logical precursor in this paper itself -- in an amazing Orwellian contradiction of the title of this article.)

Extended separations from either parent are undesirable because they unduly stress developing attachment relationships.

No research indicates that children need to develop a second attachment relationship where one does not exist; that extended separations harm secondary attachment relationships where they do exist; that where there have been two parents, there therefore is no primary attachment relationship; or that "the rules are the same" *vis a vis* babies' and children's primary attachments and other attachment relationships.

In addition, it is necessary for the interactions with both parents to occur in a variety of contexts (feeding, playing, diapering, soothing, putting to bed, etc.) to ensure that the relationships are consolidated and strengthened. In the absence of such opportunities for regular interaction across a broad range of contexts, infant-parent relationships fail to develop and may instead weaken.

No research supports this statement. In fact, above, Lamb points out, right above in his article that "infants form meaningful attachments to both of their parents... even though many fathers in our culture spend less time with their infants than mothers do." Why does "meaningful" become insufficient and transmogrify into a demand for an artificial equality when the parents do not live together?

It is extremely difficult to reestablish relationships between infants or young children and their parents when the relationships have been disrupted. Instead, it is considerably better for all concerned to avoid such disruptions in the first place.

And it is extremely difficult to fix the ill effects of the disruption joint custody causes to the infant-mother relationship. Once that damage is done, it's irreparable. Too late. By contrast, human beings of all ages form secondary attachments continually throughout their lives, based on this first template. There's no urgency to get on with them at the risk of the first.

There's no urgency, because no research supports the implication in the statement that postponing the development of or even disrupting children's *secondary* attachment relationships creates any particular detriment to them, or that an absence for a particular period of time in fact even *will* disrupt them in any significant way. These attachments are qualitatively different from primary attachments. Children form new relationships all the time. That is an ongoing process. But secondary attachments are not the original identification, security, dependency relationships which are children's primary attachment. No matter how much the fatherhood movement wishes to pretend otherwise. Infants, and especially infants of divorcing or unwed mothers, have only one of these primary relationships. And the research has found harm to infants only in the disruption of that one, the mother-child (or

substitute mother and child) primary attachment.

During this phase, children become more mobile, increase their explorations of the world, initiate more social interactions, and develop more extensive and sophisticated linguistic and cognitive abilities. These achievements increase the child's anxiety about separation from important caregivers, and this anxiety is reflected in vigorous vocal and behavioral displays of resistance to separation, especially until approximately 18 months. Thus, it is common for children between 15 and 24 months of age to resist transitions from their mothers' houses to their fathers' after marital separation, even when children have good attachment relationships with both parents.

This is inconsistent with the implication that the parental relationships are fungible and that children suffer from separation from "parents." Apparently they do not. No research supports the implication that the child's attachment to the father (assuming there is one) is comparable to the child's attachment to the mother or that this resistance is occurring for no particular reason.

However, once removed from their mothers' environments, these youngsters function well with their fathers, and vice versa.

No research supports this statement. Moreover, the "vice versa" (that once children are in a flip-flop custody situation, they will begin to "function well with their mothers") is not only gratuitous, but is meaningless: a beautiful example of the nonsensical and robotic application without thought of politically correct gender neutralism.

If planned separations are announced shortly in advance in a calm, matter-of-fact way, with reassurance that the parent (or child) will return, anxiety can be reduced. By 24 months, the majority of children no longer experience severe separation anxiety, although children with very insecure attachments and those whose primary attachment figures have their own separation difficulties may continue to express anxiety.

This is political rhetoric, setting out an alibi for the common situation in which the children in fact remain miserable flip-flopping back and forth and act that out, and where children's relationships with their primary parent have been disrupted and begin to suffer. It's also setting up the ubiquitous and convenient alibi for the obvious cause of this problem, that "It's the mother's fault."

### Goal-Corrected Partnerships

Finally, the goal-corrected partnership phase occurs between 24 and 36 months of age. It involves children's and parents' beginning to plan jointly; children are increasingly able to compromise and to take their parents' needs into some account. Children can now understand to some extent why parents come and go, and they can predict their return. However, children's primitive sense of time continues to make it difficult for 2-year-olds to comprehend much beyond today or tomorrow, and this has implications for the tolerable duration of separation from important attachment figures.

Incredible. This paragraph must have been written by Joan Kelly, because I can't believe that Michael Lamb even at his worst would talk about a 2-year-old compromising in order to take his parents' needs into account.

In sum, when given the opportunity, infants form multiple attachments, each with unique emotional meaning and importance. Physical caregiving is critical to survival and health, but social and emotional input from diverse attachment figures is important as well.

However, no research supports the implication of a "need" for the particular secondary relationship inherent in these statements. (What about all those multiple other attachment figures, which infants are even more likely to have in households where there is no resident biological father?)

Children with multiple attachments appear to create a hierarchy of caregivers, seeking out the particular caregivers that suit their needs and moods, although they tend to accept any important attachment figure for comfort and soothing when distressed or anxious in the absence of more preferred caregivers.

Ah, here they are. And in other words, the respective attachments to the two parents are not equal.

There is no evidence, however, that having multiple attachments diminishes the strength of attachments to the primary attachment figure or figures in the first 2 years of life.

But this nonsequitor is misleading. Yes, human beings are social animals. And yes, from infancy onward, human beings continually form and reform multiple attachments (and do it best when they have been provided with a strong, secure template in the secure mother-child relationship.)

However, Lamb's claim above, which is the "but" last sentence in his preceding paragraph, while technically true as a statement of the research findings that a co-resident father in an intact loving home who develops a secondary attachment with an infant does not diminish the infant's attachment to the also-present mother is false to the extent its placement in this article has been done in a way intended to imply that this applies to nonresident fathers. Joint custody is not synonymous with forming multiple attachments, and joint custody (removing the infant or small child repeatedly from the primary parent) does indeed interfere with and disrupt attachments to the primary parent. See Solomon's post-1997 research, conveniently omitted from this article, and the other joint custody research set out [here](#).

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN THE SECURITY OF ATTACHMENT

Extensive research into controlled separations from and reunions with parents (using the Strange Situation procedure) has supported the classification of attachment into secure and insecure types. Insecure attachments are further classified into avoidant, resistant, and disorganized types (Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Lamb et al., 1985, in press; Thompson, 1998). Babies with secure attachments prefer parents over strangers, may cry at separation, and immediately seek interaction or contact with and reassurance from parents when they return. About two thirds of middle-class American infants are securely attached, presumably because their parents are responsive to infant cries and distress and are psychologically available.

This research was on mother-infant attachments. Not "parents."

About 20% of infant-parent attachments in middle-class American homes are insecure avoidant. These babies seem not to notice when separated, avoid greeting the returning parents in the assessment procedure, but do not resist physical contact. Babies with insecure resistant attachments (10% to 12%) show angry, aggressive behaviors upon reunion and are not easily comforted by their parents after separation. A small number (about 5%) of babies display confused behaviors after separation and have been classified as disorganized/disoriented. Their contradictory behaviors upon reunion include gazing away while being held, odd postures, and dazed facial expressions.

Solomon and George found that TWO-THIRDS of infants in overnight visitation situations with nonresident fathers suffered disorganized attachment, AND moreover that the extended visitation time with fathers did nothing of benefit for the infant-father relationship. See the [real research here](#).

Although secure and insecure attachments were once thought to be fixed and stable over time, this appears to be true only when the infants experience reasonably stable family conditions over the course of the first 2 years (Lamb et al., in press; Thompson, 1998). Factors known to influence the security and stability of attachments include poverty; marital violence and high conflict between parents; and major life changes such as divorce, death, or the birth of a sibling, which in each instance are associated with more



insecure attachments. Insecure attachments are significantly linked to poor styles of parenting that affect the quality of the child's attachment, such as disturbed family interactions, parental rejection, inattentive or disorganized parenting, neglect, and abuse.

This appears to be nonsequititious blather to make it look like there has been an analysis of research supporting joint custody and to allay concerns over attachment disorders that arise unnecessarily because of joint custody. Would it be okay to say, oh well, we can abuse a child in some other way because that happens in X% of middle class American households?

The above blather about attachment theory is to pave the way in advance for an excuse when infants and children placed into joint custody arrangements as a result of the "advice" in this article start doing badly. It also hints at what kinds of crap to put in a custody evaluation to adequately denigrate the mother's post-divorce parenting and the post-divorce circumstances, i.e. to obscure that it is the joint custody which is creating or exacerbating the problems. The ultimate alibi: the pretext that everything is such a mess anyway that it couldn't possibly be made worse or no one could possibly prove why the kid is doing so badly. (It's everything and anything but the obvious.)

It should be noted that infant-parent attachments often become insecure in response to the parents' separation or divorce, at least for a period of time, and infants who experience a reduction in parental discord become more securely attached over time (Cummings & Davies, 1994).

This is an argument against joint custody and an argument against anything that stresses or worries a child's mother.

Thus, although infants from very high conflict parental relationships may initially have insecure attachments, their relationships with both parents may become more secure if the level of conflict between the parents declines. It is also clear that crosscultural differences in parenting styles and expectations are associated with different patterns of attachment.

"May initially have insecure"... "may become more secure"... "if..." Speculation based on an "if" that is more unlikely if the suggestions in this article are implemented. (This isn't research, and it does not support joint custody theory.)

Individual differences in the security of attachment are important. Compared to children who were initially insecure, securely attached children later are more independent, socially competent, inquisitive, and cooperative and empathic with peers; have higher self esteem; and demonstrate more persistence and flexibility on problem-solving tasks. These differences seem to reflect not only the initial differences in attachment security but also continued differences in the quality of parenting experienced (for reviews and analyses of these issues, see Lamb et al., 1985, in press; Thompson, 1998).

More argument against joint custody, and against the suggestions in this article. And now the nuts and bolts, Kelly's custody ideas:

## IMPLICATIONS OF ATTACHMENT RESEARCH FOR CUSTODY AND ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

### MAINTAINING CHILDREN'S ATTACHMENTS AFTER SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

If the parents lived together prior to separation, and the relationships with both parents were at least of adequate quality and supportiveness, the central challenge is to maintain both infant-parent attachments after separation.

Shouldn't the "central challenge" be to do what is in the infant's best interests as established by actual research?

When there are concerns about child maltreatment, substance abuse, mental illness, or interparental violence, of course, evaluations of parental adequacy are essential, and supervised or restricted visiting

may be required to avoid compromising the child's safety or development. Furthermore, when parents have never lived together, and the infant has had no opportunity to become attached to one of the parents, as is common while paternity is being established legally, special efforts are needed to foster the development of attachment relationships. These issues are beyond the scope of this article, however.

Beyond the "scope of the article" they may be but what research has found a need to "foster the development" of nonexistent relationships? (None.) Why are these baseless assumptions in here? Nothing preceding in this article or in any research elsewhere supports the notion that there is any need to develop nonexistent relationships with any particular secondary caregivers, or even to develop bad ones into good ones, if the child already has one good primary caregiving mother. No research has found any benefit to children in attempting to either, much less making such goals a "central challenge."

In general, relationships with parents play a crucial role in shaping children's social, emotional, personal, and cognitive development, and there is a substantial literature documenting the adverse effects of disrupted parent-child relationships on children's development and adjustment (Lamb, 1999; Lamb, Hwang, Ketterlinus, & Fracasso, 1999). The evidence further shows that children who are deprived of meaningful relationships with one of their parents are at greater risk psychosocially, even when they are able to maintain relationships with the other of their parents.

**Fatherlessness fallacy: base rate of of kids from divorced homes having problems is 25% versus 10% in the nondivorced population. Divorce does not affect the wellbeing of 85% of children of divorce; lack of father involvement is not necessarily "the" "divorce factor" affecting the rest. The claim that "children of divorce" are "at risk" of some kind that timesharing by two parents will be able to alleviate is a bogus claim.**

That word "crucial" again, and more citation to "literature." No research supports the implication that there is any identified element in a particular child's relationship with a second parent which provides something requisite for well-being. The research on broad "fatherless" demographic groups is confounded with numerous factors, none of which *per se* are about a second relationship with a second parent.

Stated differently, there is substantial evidence that children are more likely to attain their psychological potential when they are able to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with both of their parents, whether the two parents live together or not.

No research supports this statement; godknows what "evidence" she thinks she refers to. At this point, it's even pretty clear that the broad confounded and weak correlations in various demographic studies do not provide "evidence" either.

The research on attachment is on "a" primary attachment relationship. And all it ever has found is that children need one. One.

Having substituted "parent" repeatedly for "mother" or "primary parent," the apparent intent here is to induce the reader to supply the (carefully unstated) conclusion that children "need" relationships with nonresidential secondary parents. No research has found this, and nothing in this article preceding it even leads to this conclusion.

"[O]nly a minority of children in single-parent families are maladjusted; the majority evince no psychopathology or behavioral symptoms, whether or not they experience psychic pain... Although many social scientists have emphasized the effects of father absence on child adjustment, Amato's research clearly indicates that the bivariate association between the two variables is much weaker than one might expect. Indeed, Amato and Gilbreth's meta-analysis revealed no significant association between the frequency of father-child contact and child outcomes."

-- Lamb, LAMB-TECH 11/26/2002 6:25 PM VOI 10: 1 2002 PLACING CHILDREN'S

## INTERESTS FIRST: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PARENTING PLANS

[Of course, whether "psychic pain" is higher in this demographic group has not been established by any research. Nor is there evidence that anyone misses what they never had to start with.]

See the [research](#).

The most common practice in custody and access decisions has been to emphasize and preserve continuity in the infant-mother relationship, with children living with their mothers and having limited contact with their fathers. Thus, the infant or toddler who was accustomed to seeing both parents each day abruptly began seeing one parent, usually the father, only once a week (or once every 2 weeks) for a few hours. This arrangement was often represented by professionals as being in the best interests of the child due to the mistaken understanding, based on Bowlby's earliest speculations, that infants had only one significant or primary attachment.

These concepts stand as the only demonstrably established science we have on the best interests of very young children, notwithstanding Kelly's use of the past tense. Bowlby did not label the primary attachment relationship with the adjective "primary" because he -- and everyone else who is conscious -- did not recognize that all human beings, including children, form "multiple attachments" (including to animals, blankies, siblings...)

As a result, early child development research followed untested psychoanalytic theory in focusing exclusively on mothers and infants, presuming fathers to be quite peripheral and unnecessary to children's development and psychological adjustment.

In the complete absence of evidence that a second parent is in fact necessary to child development (and there is no such evidence), this argument is similar to the theist's argument that god must exist because there is no proof that he doesn't. Moreover, the dismissing and dismissing here of research on primary caregiver and attachment theory, and the substantial bodies of work on mammalian mother-child relationships, is amazingly specious, given they even are used right above in this article to bolster the attachment arguments where convenient.

The resulting custody arrangements sacrificed continuity in infant-father relationships, with long-term socioemotional and economic consequences for children. Very large research literatures now document the adverse effects of severed father-child relationships as well as the positive contributions that fathers make to their children's development (for reviews, see Lamb, 1997b).

("Very large [research](#) literatures." What's that? Anything like "empirical literature?")

If healthy child development required "continuity" in infant-father relationships, human beings would not have evolved such that "fathers" could "father" scores of children by different women in different geographic regions in the long nine or ten months it takes one mother to gestate a child. The children of men with normal sperm counts would have died out through evolutionary selection. And, moreover, there would not be so many anthropological examples of societies comprising "families" successfully made up of polygamous groups, extended family groups, and maternal groups in which the idea of "infant-father relationships" are irrelevant and absurd. Direct paternal care of infants and young children is virtually unknown in the history of the world. (Good heavens, how did the biblical King David ever "parent" his hundreds of children. How did the Mohawks survive in a matriarchal family system. How did notions of partible paternity ever come into existence.)

There is no research indicating that children benefit from having a second nonresidential parent. There is no research indicating that infants require "continuity" in the father-infant relationship if they have continuity with their more important primary caregiver. There is no research cited in Lamb's 1997b review, continually referenced in this article, which supports such conclusions. But to bolster this drivel, it's convenient now to go back to Bowlby and all

that "untested psychoanalytic theory":

The research reviewed by Bowlby (1973) indicated that the loss or attenuation of significant relationships in childhood can cause anxiety and a profound sense of loss, particularly in the first 2 years, when children have limited cognitive and communicative resources to help cope with loss. Both marital conflict and the abrupt departure of one parent from the child's daily life may foster insecurity in the child's attachments and should thus be avoided.

Bowlby's research was on mother-infant attachment. It was not about infant's needs of some sort for more than one primary caregiver. The word "may" is a cop-out. Almost anything is remotely possible.

To be responsive to the infant's psychological needs, the parenting schedules adopted for children younger than 2 or 3 must involve more transitions, rather than fewer, to ensure the continuity of both relationships and the child's security and comfort during a time of great change.

"Parenting schedules must" nothing. Continually interrupting the child's primary attachment also is "continuity" nothing. None of this is supported by any research.

And it's not merely unsupported by research findings -- there are ample documented negatives. In the context of a hostile and conflicted custody situation, more frequent transitions *might* tend to move the child's attachments toward a situation in which there are two inferior insecure attachments rather than one secure strong attachment to a primary caregiver (although this remains hypothetical and still would not be a benefit to child well-being, but only a benefit to politics demanding the establishment of an artificial gender neutrality and parent equality), but doing this also has *documented* negative effects, from exacerbating conflict to placing the primary caregiver under increased stress, and decreasing that caregiver's mental health and parenting ability. This is no recipe for child well-being. It's a recipe for reducing child support from ertswihle nonresidential parents. It's politics.

The ideal situation is one in which infants and toddlers have opportunities to interact with both parents every day or every other day in a variety of functional contexts (feeding, play, discipline, basic care, limit setting, putting to bed, etc.).

Why not just require them to stay married. Put the parents into therapy until they get over the desire to divorce so that they both can interact with the infant every day. This is unrealistic for nonresidential parents who so do not get along that there is litigation and custody decisions to be made, aside from being completely unsupported by any research.

Not to mention that as a demographic group fathers don't do anything close to equal amounts or kinds of basic care in functional married homes.

To minimize the deleterious impact of extended separations from either parent,

"Either parent" is political rhetoric, unsupported by any research. No research has found deleterious effects suffered by infants from being left undisturbed with their mothers.

there should be more frequent transitions than would perhaps be desirable with older children. As children reach age 2, their ability to tolerate longer separations increases,

There "should" be? This is a value judgement and "tolerate" is not indicative of a child's having a "need" or benefitting. **This is not about child well-being at all, but about how much abuse the child can sustain without being damaged!**

so most toddlers can manage 2 consecutive overnights with each parent without stress. Schedules involving alternating longer blocks of time, such as 5 to 7 days, should be avoided, as children this age still become fretful and uncomfortable when separated from either parent too long.

Ditto, the word "manage," and certainly anything having the potential to make children "fretful and uncomfortable." (If this is about fairness to fathers, let's start that discussion [here](#). And [here](#).) [liznote]

There is ample evidence that infants and toddlers get used to regular transitions,

"Get used to" is not indicative of a child's having a "need" or benefitting, but about how much abuse the child can sustain without being damaged. (Some writers now are replacing words such as "tolerate" with "enjoy," which is more than ridiculous.)

such as those associated with enrollment in alternative care facilities, without there being adverse effects on the quality of the attachments to their parents (Lamb, 1998).

In fact, infants who spend too much time in day care (more than 30 hours a week) do suffer damage to mother-child attachments. See [Myths and Facts](#) research summaries. And the research on joint custody also indicates that it harms children's relationships with both parents. See the real [research](#).

The same should be true of separations in the context of parental separation or divorce.

No research supports this statement.

Infants and toddlers should thus have multiple contacts each week with both parents to minimize separation anxiety and maintain continuity in the children's attachments.

No research supports this statement. Maybe the parents also should stay living together, but let's get down to reality. They don't. Moreover, children simply do not suffer "separation anxiety" in the care of their primary parents because some other attachment figure is not present.

Unfortunately, the concept of location-engendered stability (one home, one bed)

"Unfortunately" -- for whom?

has been incorrectly overemphasized

No research supports this statement.

for infants and toddlers, without due consideration for the greater significance to the child of the emotional, social, and cognitive contributions of both parent-child relationships.

No [research](#) supports the claim that children need more than one parent.

Living in one location (geographic stability) ensures only one type of stability.

(I haven't noticed them making this argument in custody move-away cases.)

Stability is also created for infants (and older children) by the predictable comings and goings of both parents, regular feeding and sleeping schedules, consistent and appropriate care, and affection and acceptance (Kelly, 1997).

This is yet another logical fallacy: Stability is not "created" by "comings and goings," no matter how "predictable." Stability is what exists in the absence of change. To the extent there is a repeated constant change that is predictable, that is a pattern of change. If that pattern itself does not change, then the pattern of change is "stable." However, change does not *create* stability, no matter how predictable. Stability was the default prior to the meddling.

(Notice also yet another citation to "literature" -- not research -- by the co-author of the article.)



Furthermore, postseparation access or contact schedules that are predictable and that can be managed without stress or distress by infants or toddlers provide stability after separation.

There is something not quite sane in elevating predictable disruption to a definition of "stability"...

## OVERNIGHTS WITH THE NONRESIDENTIAL PARENT

With the historic focus on preserving the mother-infant attachment while establishing an exclusive home, overnights or extended visits with the other parent (mostly the father) were long forbidden or strongly discouraged by judges, custody evaluators, therapists, mental health professionals, family law attorneys, and not surprisingly, many mothers (e.g., Garrity & Baris, 1992; Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1973; Goldstein, Freud, Solnit, & Goldstein, 1986; Hodges, 1991).

All of the actual research cited in this article is directly contrary to the conclusions this article comes to. All of it. Contrary. (Hodges 1991 is "literature," not research.)

Hodges (1991), for example, stated that for infants younger than 6 months, "overnight visits are not likely to be in the child's best interests, because infants' eating and sleeping arrangements should be as stable as possible" (p. 175). For infants 6 to 18 months of age, overnight visits "should be considered less than desirable" (p. 176). Although Hodges noted the importance of several visits per week for older infants who were attached to fathers, he recommends that these be limited to several hours. Hodges stated that children might be able to spend overnights "without harm" only after reaching 3 years of age (p. 177).

Fraudulent.

Such unnecessarily restrictive and prescriptive guidelines were not based on child development research

Not if we define "stability" properly -- and nothing like knocking the straw man.

and, thus, reflected an outdated view of parent-child relationships. Furthermore, such recommendations did not take into account the quality of the father-child or mother-child relationship,

This article now has devolved into gibberish, now implying that there is a quality determination to be made in assessing whether there might be a lower quality primary attachment versus a higher quality secondary attachment. Utter gibberish.

the nature of both parents' involvement, or the child's need to maintain and strengthen relationships with both parents after separation (Lamb, Sternberg, & Thompson, 1997).

Again, the unsupported rhetoric of "need" coupled with a citation to Lamb 1997, with not even one example of a supportive research finding. (Because no research, no research at all, supports this statement.)

Research and experience with infant day care, early preschool, and other stable caretaking arrangements indicate that infants and toddlers readily adapt to such transitions

Uhm... no, they don't. (Is "daycare" now yet another example of "stability" for Kelly?) In fact infants and toddlers do NOT "readily adapt." See Zinsmeister, [The Problem with Daycare](#). See the kibbutz studies. [See the real research](#). And go see a daycare center and spend a little

200 children were beaten daily and forced to memorize long lists of spelling words from the time they were 3 until they were 10. A control group of 200 children were raised in other ways. Each year the researchers measured and compared the children's spelling ability, and found that the children who were beaten and forced to memorize long lists of spelling words were superior spellers. The researchers also measured the children's athletic abilities and found, contrary to expectations, that there were no discernable differences in the strength and outward health of any of the children. The researchers thus concluded that beating children daily and forcing them to memorize long lists of spelling words would be beneficial to children. Asked

time there (although the problem might not be as readily apparent to those persons who have not actually been primary caregivers of their own infants and have no basis for comparison.)

researchers thus concluded that beating children daily and forcing them to memorize long lists of spelling words would be beneficial to children. Asked about the children's creative abilities, the researchers replied that there was no empirical data on that, because it had not been measured (and was too hard to measure), that they could only opine on the data they had, and that speculation wasn't scientific.

and also sleep well, once familiarized. Indeed, a child also thrives socially, emotionally, and cognitively if the caretaking arrangements are predictable and if parents are both sensitive to the child's physical and developmental needs and emotionally available (Homer & Guyer, 1993; Lamb, 1998).

Of course. Obviously it is better for a child to have a caregiver who is sensitive to the child's needs. But this statement still does not support any conclusion about who should be that caregiver. And it does not support the implication that any child requires more than one.

The evening and overnight periods (like extended days with nap times) with nonresidential parents are especially important psychologically not only for infants but for toddlers and young children as well.

Nap times? (Findings?) And yet another completely unsupported statement. One after the other, broad conclusory crap without even a logical build-up, let alone research support...

Evening and overnight periods provide opportunities for crucial social interactions and nurturing activities, including bathing, soothing hurts and anxieties, bedtime rituals, comforting in the middle of the night, and the reassurance and security of snuggling in the morning after awakening, that 1- to 2-hour visits cannot provide. These everyday activities promote and maintain trust and confidence in the parents while deepening and strengthening child-parent attachments.

Ditto. And that word "crucial" again. And... "parents?" Here, as a substitute for father. The fallacy of equivocation, now come full circle.

There is absolutely no evidence that children's psychological adjustment or the relationships between children and their parents are harmed when children spend overnight periods with their other parents. An often mis-cited study by Solomon (1997) reported high levels of insecure infant-mother and infant-father attachment when parents lived apart, although toddlers who spent overnights with both their fathers and mothers were not significantly more likely to have insecure relationships than those children who did not have overnight visits with both parents.

This is false. See note above, re cite to Solomon and George 1998, and later research. Two-thirds, disorganized (not merely insecure) attachment. To BOTH parents. Lamb and Kelly (and a number of custody evaluators who persistently have argued with me, throwing out vague allusion to "Lamb" et al.) seem to be unable to accept the later research findings. Cognitive dissonance?

Indeed, as articulated above, there is substantial evidence regarding the benefits of these regular experiences. Aside from maintaining and deepening attachments, overnights provide children with a diversity of social, emotional, and cognitively stimulating experiences that promote adaptability and healthy development.

No research supports this statement.

In addition, meaningful father-child relationships may encourage fathers to remain involved in their children's lives by making them feel enfranchised as parents.

No research supports this statement.

Other advantages of overnights are the normal combination of leisure and "real" time that extended parenting affords, the ability to stay abreast of the constant and complex changes in the child's

development, opportunities for effective discipline and teaching that are central to good parenting, and opportunities to reconnect with the child in a meaningful way. In contrast, brief, 2-hour visits remind infants that the visiting parents exist but do not provide the broad array of parenting activities that anchor the relationships in their minds.

An argument and an agenda, unsupported by any research.

When mothers are breast-feeding, there is considerable hesitation, indecision, and perhaps strong maternal resistance regarding extended overnight or full-day separations. Breast-feeding is obviously one of the important contexts in which attachments are promoted, although it is by no means an essential context. Indeed, there is no evidence that breast-fed babies form closer or more secure relationships to their parents than do bottle-fed babies.

Actually, there is research...

A father can feed an infant with the mother's expressed milk, particularly after nursing routines are well established.

False. There is considerable research proving that breastfed babies do better in the area of attachment and in numerous other ways. Overwhelming evidence. (Lest there be any remaining doubt that this is father's rights propaganda, here Kelly opines, essentially, that women are milk containers who can and should just pump the product out of their breasts. No big deal, just pump it.)

When there are overnights, it is not crucial that the two residential beds or environments be the same, as infants adapt quickly to these differences.

"Infants" sleep most of the time and don't care where. No research supports this statement, however, as it applies to toddlers. (And there's that word "crucial" again...)

It may be more important that feeding and sleep routines be similar in each household to ensure stability. Thus, parents should share information about bed times and rituals, night awakenings, food preferences and feeding schedules, effective practices for soothing, illnesses, and changes in routine as the child matures. Parents should be encouraged by attorneys or mediators to communicate directly, either verbally or in writing. If this is not possible due to the intransigence of either or both parents, then the court should order the involvement of co-parenting consultants, special masters, or custody mediators until the normal angers of divorce subside (Emery, 1994, 1999; Kelly, 1991, 1994). It is important as well to recognize that protracted litigation and the specter of winning or losing delay the decline of conflict (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992), and thus, such disputes should be resolved with speed. Furthermore, communication quality should not be judged from the level of conflict surrounding and encouraged by the litigation.

There is a "should" in every single sentence after the first, which implies it. Should, should, should, should, should... the parents "should" just stay together, lovingly, too. Why not just shoot for that?

The challenges of child-focused communication require commitment on the parents' part to their children's well-being but will have long-term positive consequences for children and for each of the parent-child relationships. Although it is clear that a cooperative relationship between parents is beneficial, parenting schedules that promote meaningful child-parent relationships should not be restricted after separation if one or both parents are not able to cooperate. Disengaged parents may function effectively in their parallel domains and, in so doing, enhance their children's adjustment (Lamb et al., 1997; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Whiteside, 1998).

Ditto. And more self-citation to Lamb 1997 which supports none of these conclusions. Neither does Maccoby.

Because high conflict is associated with poorer child outcomes following divorce (Johnston, 1994; Kelly, in press; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992), it is preferable that transitions be accomplished without overt conflict.

Why not just avoid transitions altogether? (This has gone soooooo far afield from... wasn't the premise of this paper supposed to be about how children "need" all this and "benefit" from it, and the research support for these custody "shoulds"?)

However, it is important to understand how high conflict is conceptualized in the relevant research, as the findings are often misunderstood. Almost by definition, of course, custody and access disputes involve conflict, but it is clear that such conflict in and of itself is not necessarily harmful. The high conflict found harmful by researchers such as Johnston (1994) typically involved repeated incidents of spousal violence and verbal aggression continued at intense levels for extended periods of time and often in front of the children. Johnston emphasized the importance of continued relationships with both parents except in those relatively uncommon circumstances in which intense, protracted conflict occurs.

False. "Conflict" in the research is not merely about physical or verbal aggression. It includes hostility. See the joint custody studies [summaries](#).

High conflict at the time of transition may heighten children's anxiety about separation. Even without conflict, transitions can cause unsettled behavior, fretting, and crying as children move from one set of routines or one parental style to another. As noted above, this is especially true of children 15 to 24 months of age, when it is quite normal. If conflict is difficult to avoid because of one or both parents' hostility, then transitions should be implemented by babysitters or should take place at neutral places such as day care centers, special visiting centers set up for this purpose, or supportive grandparents' homes.

Wasn't the premise of this paper supposed to be about how children "need" all this and "benefit" from it? All these children fretting, crying, changing routines...

Occasionally, mothers are very hostile to fathers after separation as part of a legal strategy to prevent or diminish the fathers' participation in child rearing and co-parenting.

And here is the ubiquitous ding against those irrational mothers who interfere for no reason at all. Wasn't the premise of this paper supposed to be about how children "need" all this and "benefit" from "appropriate" custody decisions based on research?

In such instances, fathers should not be denied adequate contact with their children because conflict between the parents exists.

Wasn't the premise of this paper supposed to be about how children "need" all this and "benefit" from it?

Similarly, when fathers berate mothers at transitions or refuse to communicate about the infants' behaviors when with them, they will need to demonstrate more cooperative attitudes to warrant more extended contact.

None of this is about what children need.

It should be assumed that parents would have somewhat different parenting styles, which are related to their own upbringing and personalities. Regardless of these differences, children (and parents) benefit from discussions of disciplinary techniques and approaches as well as about the achievement of major developmental tasks such as toilet training. Furthermore, children will typically have different social experiences (and holiday rituals) with each parent and with extended families and friends.

Blather. (Was there research somewhere about holiday rituals and infants?)

## HOW MUCH SEPARATION FROM PRIMARY ATTACHMENT FIGURES IS APPROPRIATE?

The extent to which infants and toddlers can tolerate

"Tolerate?" Wasn't there some premise underlying this paper about how children "need" all this "stability" of "maintaining" relationships with "parents" and how they "benefit" from it? "Tolerate" is a word which implies that something negative is occurring.

separation from significant attachment figures is related to their age, temperament, cognitive development, social experience, and the presence of older siblings. Aside from their very immature cognitive capacities, infants have no sense of time to help them understand separations, although their ability to tolerate longer separations from attachment figures increases with age.

"Tolerate."

The goal of any access schedule should be to avoid long separations from both parents

No research supports the implication that children...

to minimize separation anxiety

...have separation anxiety when they remain in the care of their primary parent mothers.

and to have sufficiently frequent and broad contact with each parent to keep the infant secure, trusting, and comfortable in each relationship.

No research supports the "each parent" part as beneficial to children, or the notion that frequent changes will achieve this stated goal. In fact, the research indicates otherwise.

Preschool children can tolerate lengthier separations than toddlers can, and many are comfortable with extended weekends in each parent's home as well as overnights during the week. In general, however, most preschool children become stressed and unnecessarily overburdened by separations from either parent that last more than 3 or 4 days.

Nonsense. There is absolutely not a whit of research indicating that children suffer separation anxiety when they remain with their primary parents.

The exception might be planned vacations, in which parents and siblings are fully available to engage preschool children in novel, stimulating, and pleasurable activities. Even so, most parents would be advised to limit vacations at this age to 7 days and to schedule several vacations rather than one single lengthy vacation.

"Most parents"? Half of them are the primary caregiver (mostly) mothers. There is an obvious problem with the use of the word "parents" in this article. First, it was used to obscure attachment research applicable only to primary caregiver mothers, to imply that the findings were applicable to secondary attachment relationships. Here it is used, again, speciously, to avoid acknowledging that the parents are not equal, and that it is only one of the parents with whom preschool children are going to have separation anxiety on extended vacations.

When children reach school age, they have significantly more autonomy and greatly increased cognitive, emotional, and time-keeping abilities, so the duration of separations from both parents becomes less critical. Even so, before the age of 7, and often thereafter, most youngsters still enjoy reunions during the week with each parent rather than extended periods without contact.

Again, the pretense that the "parents" are equal. What applies to one, applies to the other. However, the parents are never equal and this is never the case.



By 7 or 8 years of age, most youngsters can manage 5- to 7-day separations from parents as part of their regular schedules and 2-week vacations with each parent. Court orders for young children that reflect children's increasing ability to tolerate lengthier separations by building age-based and stepwise increases into vacation schedules are most responsive to children's best interests.

"Tolerate." "Manage." Again. Words connoting dealing with something negative. How much abuse children can take without breaking. Would the negative be the constant changes, or the separation from the primary parent? Children don't need to "tolerate" or "manage" separations from the parent who was not the primary caregiver and residential parent to that point.

We are one paragraph away from the end of this article, and there has been not one -- not ONE -- single citation to research supporting any of these custody ideas, and not one single example has been given illustrating why children need or benefit from any of this. Not even an anecdote.

Many discussions of custody decisions have emphasized the need to identify a primary caretaker when attempting to determine where children should spend most of their residential time (for a review, see Kelly, 1994). The expanded world of young school-age children, the greater richness of children's emotional and cognitive abilities, and the increasing importance of children's social and recreational life outside the home lead many to conclude that the concept of the primary caretaker should play little role in determining custody, however, particularly after the age of 5 (Chambers, 1984. As noted throughout this article, children are enriched by regular, diverse, and appropriate interactions with two involved and emotionally supportive parents, and this is no less true of school-age children as they journey toward adolescence. Regardless of who has been the primary caretaker, therefore, children benefit from the extensive contact with both parents that fosters meaningful father-child and mother-child relationships.

The concluding paragraph throws in another citation to Kelly that does not support the ideas set forth, a couple of additional ideas, a slam at primary caregivers, and a citation to a researcher that does not support joint custody.

Unfortunately, it's easy to be a prolific writer repeating disorganized illogical crap that is not supported by research. The problem is that there is just so much more of this garbage than the reverse, and that, it does, sadly appeal to those who do need their reading "facilitated" and their personal agendas justified.

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**LIZNOTES are in black and [red](#).**

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**NOTE:** Part of the problem is that when it's about families, and most persons have them, the tendency is too great to personalize. Personal experiences, disappointments, and the tendency of some to want to "fix" what happened in their own pasts affects judgement. Gender bias contributes to skewed thinking as well.

Professional men especially tend to relate as "fathers" more to utterly dissimilar persons carrying the same label, and think "What if it were me" than they can (and should) to a being a single primary caregiving parent of children. The latter, ironically requires only one possible data change, the death of a spouse, to put them into very similar positions as those held by unwed single mothers, with the only -- and significant -- difference then being that under such circumstances, no strange man they had a transient previous relationship with ever will be coming out of the woodwork to claim the right to dictate what their schedules will be like, where they reside, or how they "should" rear their children.

Professional women who are in good marriages, or otherwise have emotionally positive and supportive relationships with the fathers of their children, or their own fathers, also may assign the label of fatherhood first, and define the person so labelled as sharing the characteristics that label calls up, emotionally, in their personal experiences. Another personal situation factor that distorts the thinking of many professional women is that most did not get to be professional women by prioritizing the care and

well-being of their children; now, they suffer guilt and the desire to prove that what they did (or didn't do) for their own children did not harm them, or helped them (whether that was joint custody, or extensive third party care.) And still another factor is that a lot of these women are childless or are second wives married to divorced men.

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**NOTE:** I considered trying to do this a little more gently, or a little more respectfully of the academic standing of Lamb, especially, as a giant in the research field, or with a lighter touch, perhaps with a parody article by a Ross Lamb and Min Jelly, but my heart just wasn't in it. Children are being harmed while these psychological researchers and others like them sell out their integrity to promote father's rights, playing on the ignorance of their legal audience, the self-interest rampant in the mental health audience, and the misogyny and gullibility of everyone else.

A lot of false ideas can be presented in a way that makes it appear as if they have been established by following technically correct statements and summaries of research with conclusions and opinions that do not logically follow from that research and which are not supported by findings in the cited research.

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**NOTE:** Children's relationships with their mothers are far more complex than their relationships with their fathers. Both negatives and positives are felt more strongly (as is the case with interactions with other persons of relatively different attachments, e.g. the higher level of anger felt upon a wrong or betrayal of trust committed by a lover versus a casual friend.) Consequently, it is true that many times (especially in our cultures of overly prolonged legal "childhood" and which also denigrate adult women's worths and social status) older children and adult children sometimes come to prefer and enjoy their fathers over their mothers (just as at some point in their lives they also come to prefer their spouses to both of their parents.) This phenomenon is not inconsistent with primary attachment theory, and should not be viewed as such. (I have observed that it does, however, color the perceptions of a number of custody evaluators, lawyers, and activists who have experienced difficult relationships with their own mothers and/or with their own children, or simply have identified more with men in this male-standard world. See [liznotes](#) generally on this issue.)

This methodology known as science is not innate within us and in fact does not come naturally or intuitively<sup>5</sup>. It had to be discovered as an curative for human beings' innate inability to form valid and reliable beliefs. Our brains are designed for our physical and emotional survival, not our wisdom. Left to their own devices, our brains take in information from the outside world that is heavily laced with our preconceptions, biases, cultural perspectives and the like. External reality becomes congruent with our internal beliefs, and not the other way around. Evidence to support preexisting pet theories is astonishingly easily found, though surprisingly it disappears when sought by nonbelieving investigators. Our brains have an Olympian ability to jump to conclusions, and they will, for example, decide that A caused B simply because A occurred before B. They will also commit reasoning errors and fallacies so routine and mundane they were catalogued by the ancients 3000 years ago, but so ingrained and persistent that 3000 years of warnings against them have done nothing to abate their prevalence.

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:** Consider: what would differentiate the second-parent caregiver from anyone else who loves the child as well and resides in the child's household? That he once had sex with the mother? Obviously not. That there's a DNA tie? Obviously not, since other relatives, grandparents, siblings, etc. also share DNA. So what, then? De facto parent status? (This latter would seem to be an argument to abolish the rights of nonresident biological parents in favor of resident stepparents and paramours functioning in a parenting capacity.) The answer is: nothing. The notion of automatic biological paternal ties is irrational, and the claim to its importance is political. Our preferences for biological fathers as second parents hail from the happenstance of cultural ideas. This structure of "family" is not a given in human society, and not indicative of any "need" for human child wellbeing. The only reason children usually have strong ties to biological fathers in our society is that in most nuclear intact households, our cultural ideal, there are two full-time resident adults, and the father happens to be one of them. This is politics. Not "children's best interests." See the [research](#). And more [research](#).

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**NOTE:** I have a difficult time believing that this was just the unfortunate accidental result of overzealous political correctness, given that so much of Lamb's research actually has involved looking at and comparing the differences in infants' relationships with fathers and mothers; one would think that Lamb, in particular, would be attuned to this.

See, e.g., from earlier and arguably less agenda'd research: Ann M. Frodi, Michael E. Lamb, et al., *Father-mother infant interaction in traditional and nontraditional Swedish families: A longitudinal study*, 5 J of Fam & Econ Issues 3 (1983): "Regardless of relative involvement in child care, infants directed more affiliative and attachment behaviors to their mothers than

to their fathers."

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**NOTE:** Reproduction is not gender neutral. Females' bodies, from gestation through breastfeeding, including their hormones (which regulate behavior and emotions) are geared to childbearing and rearing in ways that males' bodies simply are not. In the absence of research indicating otherwise, and in the context of human history and anthropological observations of societies over eons, the position which stretches credulity is the one which presumes that there are no *other* differences in any other ways than physically between mothers and fathers. Even recognizing that not all mothers are nurturing of their own offspring, and that many women are not nurturing in general toward non-offspring others, is not tantamount to support for the claim that therefore there are no differences between fathers and mothers vis a vis their own children. Exceptions always exist of course, and it is fallacious to refuse to recognize that possibility or readily to recognize and acknowledge such exceptions when they present themselves. However, it is equally fallacious to presume that observable differences in children's relationships with their fathers and mothers are all merely attributable to some lack of paternal opportunity, or maternal gatekeeping, or social inducements -- and not at least as likely to be the result of real sex-based differences between the parents.

The gender "essentialists" approach the agenda of achieving parental rights for fathers in a way that is precisely the opposite of gender neutralists such as Lamb and Kelly -- by purporting to find a special "need" of children for male parenting or role modeling. They then struggle with the problem of how to establish this as a need for the particular biological sire. Their approach is just as scientifically unsupported, but politically is somewhat more honest and more centered on children's interests. For example, Blankenhorn would condemn divorce but in the post-divorce circumstances, would prioritize children's welfare by emphasizing continuity and stability in the maternal home rather than just seeking to perpetuate male parenting rights in the absence of marriage via joint custody and a no-fault "normalization" of divorce as a viable pretense of "family" or the idiotic notion of children's having a "bi-nuclear family." See the [research](#), and see "[Deconstructing the Deconstructing](#): a critique of Silverstein and Auerbach."

Also see, for research on what happens when mammal infants repeatedly are removed from their mothers (and other abuse): Cicchetti D. "An Odyssey of Discovery: Lessons Learned through Three Decades of Research on Child Maltreatment", *American Psychologist* (Nov. 2004): Vol. 59, No. 8, pp. 731-41. Glaser D. "Child Abuse and Neglect and the Brain A Review," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines* (Jan.Feb. 2000): Vol. 41, No. 1, pp. 97-116. Luecken LJ, et al. "Early Caregiving and Physiological Stress Responses," *Clinical Psychology Review* (May 2004): Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 171-91. Nemeroff CB, et al. "Differential Responses to Psychotherapy versus Pharmacotherapy in Patients with Chronic Forms of Major Depression in Childhood Trauma," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Nov. 25, 2003): Vol. 100, No. 24, pp.14,293-96. Sapolsky RM. *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: A Guide to Stress, Stress Related Diseases, and Coping*. W.H. Freeman, 1994.

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**NOTE:** Many human societies have not been based around the nuclear heterosexual married couple family. In fact, this is perhaps a relatively new phenomenon. See the [research](#) and more [research](#).

"Despite appearances to the contrary (fostered by anthropocentric nursery stories), a distinct role for male parents does not exist in nature. Fatherhood was invented by humans during the agricultural revolution about six thousand years ago. Symbolized by the new god-king, it incorporated the mother's originally superior role in primate families -- the control or ownership of children. The male deity could even make his own offspring without female help. This inflated political figure was designed to compensate for the male's modest role in procreation, once the facts of life were known. Patriarchy was born out of an envious attack on mothers." SEBASTIAN KRAEMER B.A., M.R.C.P., F.R.C.Psych (1991) *The Origins of Fatherhood: An Ancient Family Process* *Family Process* 30 (4), 377-392.

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**NOTE:** While the constant "management" of it as some kind of meaningless noise implies otherwise, the reality is that babies and young children just don't fret and cry for no reason at all, as if these were defective responses to some kind of stimulus that "should" provide a different kind of response. The need to mold human children as if they were blank slates, or some kind of clay, has resulted in all kinds of now-discredited childrearing ideas over the eons, everything from the ostensible dangers of breastfeeding, to those of sparing the rod; from genital and other physical mutilations thought to be necessary for health or spiritual salvation, to the very mutilation of minds and emotions. One would think, at the least, that if we've learned nothing else, it would be to slow down, especially in circumstances in which there is not even a modicum of research to support the cherished religious, social and political notions *du jour*.



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(Find annotated Research on Fatherhood, Motherhood, Joint Custody and related topics at <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/liz>)

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"I've been in this business (of academia) for nearly a quarter century now and nothing depresses me more than the rampant, seemingly inveterate mis-characterization that lies at the core of nearly every academic debate. We are not incapable of arguing about intellectual substance and empirical reality, but we seem to prefer misunderstanding as a subject for invective. The root of this lamentable behavior can only lie in careless habits of reading and thinking (or, worse, in our willingness to argue without reading at all)."

News link: Evisceration of Loftus and her memory research on the stand.

-- Stephen J. Gould. as quoted in Belsky, J. (2001). Emanuel Miller Lecture Developmental Risks (Still) Associated with Early Child Care. *J. Child Psycho. Psychiat.* Vol. 42, No. 7, pp. 845-859.

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