

A Response to the Shared Parenting Propaganda

Contained in Kuehnle, K., Drozd, L., Parenting Plan Evaluations: Applied Research for the Family Court, Oxford (2012), presented in an AFCC conference; paper available at http://www.lesliedrozd.com/lectures/Kuehnle_Drozd_AFCC-FL_WA_Spring_2012.pdf (or see <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/mothers/2012-AFCC.pdf>).

Kuehnle and Drozd ("K-D") posit "role playing" teaching scenarios -- the attorney's questions and the expert's putative response, which is going to be discredited.

Attorney. I see that in your evaluation, Dr. Knight, that you have recommended no overnights for 3 year old Quinn with his father.

Expert. Yes. In my professional opinion, the father should not have overnights with his 3 year old son, Quinn, because the research is robust in demonstrating that overnights for children 3 years and younger is detrimental to their developmental trajectory.

liznote: The expert's opinion more properly first should be couched in terms of why "in this case" it is preferable for this child now to not have overnights. By referring only to research -- and demographic research in any event cannot ipso facto be applied "in this case" to any individual -- the expert is being set up (and by suggesting this kind of response, K-D are propagandizing). The problem with too readily applying soc/psych "research" to any individual can be understood by considering that the "average" person in the United States is a hermaphrodite with one testicle. The research must come in with more specificity, in consideration of the actual individual circumstances. Thus, K-D's next role-play, in which the attorney jumps on this:

Attorney. When you say "the research," are you referring to specific studies that purport to address what is best for ALL children 3 years of age and younger whose parents live in separate households?

liznote: And now there's the set-up for a gotcha:

Expert. Correct.

Attorney. What are the studies that support this proposition?

Expert. There are many studies. Research by McIntosh and research by Solomon and George come to mind among many others.

liznote: The expert will need to extricate by explaining that whether or not there is perfect research on his side, it is more than we have on the other side. And he could use that to turn the lawyer's line of cross right around. K-D imagine this scenario, however:

Attorney. Is it not true, Dr. Knight, that researchers Kelly & Lamb state that the ideal situation is where infants and toddlers have opportunities to interact with both parents every day or every other day in a variety of functions and contexts, for example, feeding, play, discipline, basic care, limit setting, putting to bed?

Expert. Yes

liznote: But the correct response is not "yes". Note how cleverly the question is posed as "researchers' statements" rather than research findings. The expert's response more

accurately should be that if the attorney is asking whether Kelly and Lamb have research findings that this is the "ideal situation", the answer is "no". "Researchers" just as anyone else, are entitled to state their personal opinions and values, but the substance of the only research findings we actually have goes the other way. After getting the expert bogged down in admitting to the flaws in the research that supports his opinion, the fantasized role-play ends with another unnecessary "admission" by the expert:

Attorney: Dr. Knight, is it not possible that Quinn would adapt without significant problems to overnights with his father given that he has an easygoing temperament and has lived with his father in an intact family prior to the divorce litigation?

Expert: It is Possible.

liznote: A far better response would be that "anything is possible" but the expert is opining regarding what is more likely in this particular case, and has taken into consideration... [etc.]

K-D's presentation then purports to go into a discussion of the differences between good research, bad research, and pseudo-science. The clear implication for the audience is that anything stated by "researchers Kelly and Lamb" must be good research, and that the research referenced on overnights in the introductory role play must be the bad research or even pseudo-science. This is propaganda.

K-D's presentation then launches into an elementary lesson on research flaws and biases, and then into an example issue -- parental alienation -- to discuss the purported research. Again the implication is that there must be some sound science somewhere, perhaps in the more recent nuanced "research" by Drozd et al. There is not. Postulating hypotheses and categorizing or describing things, even in a more well-considered or objective think-piece is still not "science". (Also note that "theory" has a specific meaning in science -- it is not a hypothesis -- and is continually misused by K-D and these psychologists). See <http://www.arachnoid.com/psychology/> "Is Psychology a Science?"

They are correct when they state these conclusions, however:

There can be many reasons that a child rejects or resists contact with one of their parents. Not wanting to see a parent may be the result of something that is very normal developmentally or it can be the result of some kind of abuse and it could be the result of many kinds of parenting problems, one of which could be alienating behaviors by one parent...

There remains no consensus for a single definition for alienation. The evidence that supports alienation is largely based on clinical opinions and expert opinions and not solid research.

Unfortunately, psychologists have no special expertise in divining the unseen facts or discerning with scientific certainty what is the cause of these kinds of behavior in any particular case. Notwithstanding the K-D marketing of their expertise via the extensive presentation on alienation articles, the problem would be better left to the evidence presented by the lawyers and the trier of fact. This arguably has less chance of error, since the evidence such as it is will not be confounded by the pseudo-evidence of the expert hypothesizing (opinion; guess) or skewed based upon who has more money to hire more experts. But even if the old adversarial lawyering method didn't reduce the

chances of error, it's better to purchase the same wrong outcome for less money. Of particular note, re "reunification therapies", there can be no appropriate "treatment" for undiagnosable symptoms with an unknown cause. There are no researched treatment protocols for "reunification therapy" -- it's make-believe make-it-up-as-you-go stuff.

Finishing the portion of the talk on alienation, the K-D presentation then moves on to something that ostensibly can be seen and heard and measured, but also can just be assumed to exist using meager circumstantial evidence: ~~maternal~~ parental gatekeeping [liznote: must pretend to stay gender neutral and politically correct].

From the anti-mother erstwhile PAS purveyor's point of view, gatekeeping "theory" is even better than parental alienation because one can criticize the supposed gatekeeping parent's failure to encourage the correct relationship with the other parent (he has a bad relationship, ipso facto...), or make a brouhaha of the most insignificant of behaviors notwithstanding no harm to or effect on the child, accomplishing the desired custody result with only a marginal amount of evidence.

K-D do a lot of innovative labeling and categorizing of different kinds of "gatekeeping" -- the gate-closing and gate-opening kinds, protective or justified gatekeeping, and so forth. None of this is science. It is, rather, akin to making a filing system. They also cite to unsupportable truisms as "research empirical generalizations" such as: "**Exposure of children to parent conflict will be harmful and RG [restrictive gatekeeping] causes conflict.**" There is some research establishing that parental conflict (violence, hostility) can be harmful, but there is no research establishing that gatekeeping causes conflict.

More propaganda (bringing us full circle to the introductory Kelly-Lamb crap about infant overnights) and their criticisms of Solomon, George, and McIntosh on infant attachment:

Children show best adjustment when they enjoy quality relationships with both parents

The problem with this conclusion as a "research empirical generalization" is perhaps best illustrated by this quote of Mike Peterson, mocking it:

"...Just add Dad, the magic ingredient. It's hard to know where wishful thinking becomes deliberate deception. But this argument, advanced by the fathers' rights movement, is like saying that, since Mercedes Benz owners make more money than people who drive Hyundais, you will become wealthy if you buy a Mercedes..."

The most obvious problem with K-D's criticism of the infant overnight research is that even if we agreed that there are all the flaws in it that K-D et al. allege there are, there still is no research demonstrating that infants need to be attached to two parents, or that infant overnights or joint custody ("timesharing") as currently practiced will facilitate such attachment or that any of it is necessary to facilitate children's wellbeing (correlation is not causation). The scale remains tipped "against". (Claims otherwise are just specious.)

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See liz's in-depth critique of Kelly and Lamb's infant overnight politics and the research at <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/liz/lamb-kelly.html>