

SHARED PARENTING: REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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“Shared parenting” (joint physical custody) as used throughout this presentation & on this quiz means the children are living 35%-50% of the time with their fathers

Which of the following do you believe are generally true for the majority of divorced parents and their children?

The Parents

- 1. Shared parenting only succeeds when the parents are friendly, cooperative & relatively conflict free.
- 2. Angry, uncooperative couples usually become even angrier when they have a shared parenting plan.
- 3. Most divorced couples cannot be taught how to make shared parenting work.
- 4. Shared parenting only benefits kids when both parents are equally enthusiastic about it from the outset.
- 5. Shared parenting generally only works well for college educated, upper income parents.
- 6. Court ordered or mediated shared parenting plans generally fail.
- 7. If there is any history of physical abuse between the parents, shared parenting will increase the violence.

The majority of children living in shared parenting families....

- 8. are no better off than children who see their fathers regularly but live with their mothers in terms of their emotional, academic, psychological & social wellbeing.
- 9. want to live with one parent instead of having two homes
- 10. only benefit from this lifestyle if their parents have similar parenting styles & similar values
- 11. end up living with their mother anyway because shared parenting usually fails
- 12. have no better relationships with their fathers than children who see their dads every other weekend
- 13. feel the benefits are not worth the hassles and inconvenience of living in two homes
- 14. feel insecure, unsettled, and “homeless”.
- 15. are exposed to more conflict than children living primarily with one parent

The youngest children: Spending overnight time in their father’s care.....

- 16. is generally detrimental to children under the age of four
- 17. causes a host of problems for infants under the age of two
- 18. damages infants’ relationships with their mothers
- 19. must be limited to one night a week to prevent serious problems for children under three
- 20. Damages the “primary” attachment that infants instinctively have to their mothers

Your score? Total marked “true”

Source: Nielsen, L. “Shared physical custody: Review of recent research.” (2013) *American Journal of Family Law*, 27, 61-72 & 123-137.

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OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN – SHARED VS. SOLE PHYSICAL CUSTODY

Dr. Linda Nielsen. “Shared physical custody: Outcomes for children. Review of research” (2013) *American Journal of Family Law*, 27, pp. 61-72 & 123-137.

Author	Children		Academic Cognitive	Emotional Psychological	Aggression Delinquency Drugs, alcohol	Physical health	Quality of Father-child relationship
	Shared	Sole					
Bergstrom	17,350	34,452	Equal	better		better	better
Bjarnason	2,206	25,578		better			better
Breivik	41	483	equal	better	better		
Brotsky	26	13		better	better		
Buchanan	51	455	better	better	better	better	better
Cashmore 1 st 2 nd	440	418		better	better		
	84	473	better		better	better	
Campana	207	309		better	better		
Carlsund	801	270			better		better
Carlsund	888	2,019		better		better	
Fabricius	30	201					Better
Fabricius	337	686					Better
Fabricius	75	136				better	Better
Fabricius	25	25				better	Better
Frank	16	90					Better
Irving	201	194					Better
Jablonska	443	2,920	better		better		
Janning	5	17					Better
Kaspiew x	750	4,250		better	better	better	
Kline	35	58		better	equal		Better
Lee	20	39			better		
Lodge	105	518	equal		equal		Better
Luepnitz	22	69		equal			Better
McIntosh 1 st x 2 nd	*18-250	14-360		mixed		equal	
	54	87		equal			better
Melli	597	595		equal		better	Better
Maccoby	150	1,050					Better
Neoh	27	37		better	better		
Pearson 1 st 2 nd	62	459		better	better		
	9	83		equal	equal		
Spruijt	135	495	Equal	better (girls)	better (girls)		Better
Smart	21	96		equal			Better
Sondermans	180	528		equal			Better
*sizes varied on different measures	x= government report, not a peer reviewed article						

WHAT'S A WOZZLE?

1 THE AMERICAN BABY STUDY (June, 2013)

Tornello, S., Emery, R. et al Overnight custody arrangements, attachment and adjustment among very young children. Journal of Marriage and Family, 75, 871-885.

A new research study from the University of Virginia shows that infants & toddlers who spend even one night a week in their father's care become insecurely attached to their mothers

Psych central **Overnight Stays Away From Home Affect Babies' Attachments**



July 21, 2013 What happens when babies spend a night or more each week away from their primary caregiver — as increasingly happens in cases where parents share custody — but do not live together? Researchers from the University of Virginia found that those infants had more insecure attachments to their mothers compared to babies who had fewer overnights or saw their fathers only during the day. **“Judges often find themselves making decisions regarding custody without knowing what actually may be in the best interest of the child, based on psychology research,” Tornello said.**

U.S. News & World Report. Overnight Separation From Mother Linked to Weaker Infant Bond July 26, 2013 Infants who spent at least one night a week away from their mothers had weaker bonds with their mothers than infants who were with their mothers every night, study finds.

The Telegraph. London. “Babies who spent more than one night a week away from mother are 'more insecure”

Psychiatry News: Overnight Custody Creates Attachment Issues in Children

Science News: Joint Custody? Overnights Away from Home Affect Children's Attachments

#2 THE AUSTRALIAN BABY STUDY (May 2010)

McIntosh, J., Smyth, B.; Kelaher, M.; Wells, Y. (2010) Post separation parenting arrangements: outcomes for infants and children. Australian Attorney General's Office: Commissioned report.

Research from Australia shows that infants who spend even one overnight a week in their father's care become less securely attached to their mother and become more irritable, inattentive and behaviorally troubled than those who do not overnight. They are so stressed they are even more likely to wheeze and have asthma attacks, to gag on their food and to kick and bite their mothers

INFANTS & CHILDREN UNDER AGE FOUR - THE 2 WOZZLED STUDIES

McIntosh, J. et al (2010) *Post separation parenting arrangement: outcomes for infants and children*. Australian Government, Sydney. ****This was a commissioned government report, not a peer reviewed article in an academic journal.**

Tornello, S., Emery, R. et al (2013) Overnight custody arrangements, attachment and adjustment among very young children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75, 871-885.

	McIntosh (2010)	Tornello (2013)
% parents never married before separation	75% 30% never lived together	85% half never lived together
characteristics of the sample	30% reported physical conflict/violence	all inner city slums – 20 largest cities 85% minorities 65% below poverty level 50% incarceration record 45% high school dropouts 65% have kids with different fathers
Outcomes : occasional vs. frequent vs. no overnighting	Infants: no differences on 5 of 6 measures of well being 2-3 year olds: No differences on 6 of 7 measures of wellbeing	No differences on 7 of 8 measures of wellbeing
Negative outcomes for frequent overnighters	14 moms said infants who overnighted > 4 nights a month were more irritable than 43 infants overnighting < 4 times 18 moms said infants who overnighted < 4 nights gazed at her & tried to get her attention more often than 141 infants never overnighted. This was interpreted as “insecure attachment” even though these 3 questions have never been validated to measure this 59 2-3 year olds overnighting 35% time were more “difficult” with mom (refuse to eat, clingy, getting upset at her)	According to mothers, infants & toddlers were less securely attached to her if they frequently overnighted – but the results were mixed with no clear pattern between overnighting & mothers’ ratings. Invalid data: The attachment test is invalid because the mothers did the rating. It is only valid if trained observers rate the relationship after watching the mother & child interact for several hours
Data contradicting the claim that overnighting had a negative impact	Frequent overnighters had same irritability scores as infants in married families Frequent overnighters were not more irritable than infants who never overnighted	Better behavior for 4-5 years olds who had been frequently overnighting as 3 year olds No clear pattern between attachment scores & frequency of overnighting. Occasional overnighters had better attachment scores than non overnighters

OVERNIGHT PARENTING FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN UNDER AGE FIVE

Oldest to newest	Sample size & ages	Overnights per month	Outcomes Overnighting compared to no overnighting	Parents were married before separating
Kline 1989	75 18 40% under 5	1-4 50%	Better adjusted emotionally Dads: 100% still involved 2 years later	all
Solomon George 1999	46 44 All under 2	none 4 or less	No difference in attachment to mother No difference on challenging tasks with mother	80%
Maccoby Mnookin 1992	950 150 40% under 4	< 30% 30%-50%	Better on all measures of child wellbeing Dads: 100% still involved vs. 60%	all
Pruett 2004	33 99 80% under 4	none 4-8	No differences 2-3 year olds Better outcomes 4-6 year olds, especially girls	75%
Melli 2008	595 597 40% under 5	< 35% 35%-50%	Less depressed, better health, more satisfied	all
Kaspiew 2009 (x)	3513 480 All under 5	< 35% 35%-50%	Marginally better emotionally & behaviorally	50%
McIntosh 2010 (x)	115-346 * 14-200 5 – 59 all under 4	none < 35% 35% - 50%	No differences on 4 of 7 measures Wheezing: frequent overnights best Mixed results: irritability, task persistence & attachment to mother (on invalid procedure) Frequent overnight toddlers' worse with mom (refuse to eat, clingy, being upset, kicking her) But behavior was in normal range	*10% -30%
Tornello 2013	310 -538 * 171-313 51-103 all under 4	None 1-3 20%-70%	No differences on 5 of 7 measures of well being Attachment to mom: mixed results – invalid procedure	15%
Fabricius 2013	10 12 12	None 2-7 25%-50%	Better relationship with father as young adults Fewer somatic health problems as young adults	all

* numbers varied greatly depending on outcome being measured

x government commissioned report, not a peer reviewed academic article