

*Post-divorce Family Life for Children: An Overview of Research and Some Implications for Policy cont.*

items: feeling close to the parent; being satisfied with the amount of affection received from the parent; desiring to be the kind of person the parent is; and doing things with the parent that the child really enjoyed. This last question was replaced with a item measuring how well the child could share ideas or talk with the parent for the follow-up survey when the children were 18-22 years old.

The percentage of "poor" father-child relationships as defined by the investigators was startling in divorced families—32% at age 12 to 16 and 65% at age 18 to 22. Comparable figures were 14% and 29% for father-child relationships in married families. Mother-child relationships were notably better in both family types, and an identical 8% of 12 to 16 year olds reported "poor" mother-child relationships in both divorced and married families. A significant difference emerged as the children became young adults, however, as 25% of 18 to 22 year old children from divorced families reported poor mother-child relationships versus 18% from married families.

Other research has documented that troubled parent-child relationships precede divorce, but the accelerated deterioration of parent-child relationships in divorced versus married families during the transition to adulthood makes it clear that divorce exacerbates normative struggles in parent-child relationships. Numerous studies and anecdotal reports of the struggles of parenting alone also suggest that divorce challenges parent-child relationships in many ways that married parents rarely face. Thus, it seems clear that another major stressor resulting from divorce is the risk for troubled relationships with both residential and especially nonresidential parents. As is discussed shortly, troubled parent-child relationships are substantially related to various measures of children's psychological adjustment after divorce.

#### *Children's Involvement in Interparental Conflict*

An end to conflict is supposed to be one of the positive consequences of divorce for parents. The end of conflict also is expected to be positive for children, as a large body of research documents that children have more psychological problems when their parents have a conflicted marriage. Conflict obviously precedes marital separation and divorce, however, evidence makes it clear that conflict does not end with a separation. In fact, conflict may come to focus more openly and squarely on the children who may have been buttressed from parental disputes during the marriage.

It is not known to what extent conflict is lessened or worsened from typical levels during the unhappy marriage to the times after marital separation, but it is clear that interparental conflict is prevalent throughout separation and divorce. In a study of over 1,000 California families who had filed for divorce, Maccoby and Mnookin found that 1½ years after the marital separation, 34% of couples had a conflicted coparenting relationship, 26% were cooperative coparents, 29% were disengaged, and 11% were mixed, that is their relationship was both cooperative and conflicted. Even 3½ years after the marital separation, 26% of parents in the study had conflicted coparenting relationships, whereas 29% had a cooperative relationships, 41% were disengaged, and 4% were mixed. Coparenting conflict was unrelated to the type of custody arrangement following separation, as no significant differences in conflict were found for children living primarily with mothers, fathers, or in a joint residential arrangement.

Other research suggests that, while conflict obviously precedes marital separation in most cases, children in some families appear to be protected from conflict during marriage but entrapped in conflict during a divorce. Amato, Loomis, and Booth found that children from high-conflict married

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are aware of during their parents' marriage. For these reasons, interparental conflict can be viewed as another stressor that typically accompanies divorce.

#### [22.60]

### Notes & Questions

1. In what ways, if any, can the government, through family law and the welfare system, children to adjust to the aftermath of divorce? Consider what policies concerning property rights, child support, residence and contact decisions and welfare benefits might ease the turmoil of parental separation for children. See also Chapter 12 and Chapter 23.
2. As the extract indicates, conflict between parents is a frequent by-product of parental separation, and may be very detrimental to children's wellbeing. However, whether or not it is detrimental, and if so, to what extent, depends on how the conflict is expressed and managed: J Kelly, "Current Research on Children's Post-Divorce Adjustment: No Simple Answers" (1993) 31 *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* 29 at 33-35.
3. For an example of a program to help children adjust to parental separation see the UnitedCare's program, The Anchor, at <http://www.theanchor.org.au>. See also R Hain Sandler, S Wolchik, J-Y Tein and S Dawson-McClure, "Changing the Legacy of Divorce: Evidence from Prevention Programs and Future Directions" (2003) 52 *Family Relations* 397.

### The long-term consequences of marriage breakdown for children

[22.65] Studies of the long-term effects of divorce on the psychological adjustment of children vary in the extent to which they find adverse effects on children in divorcing families, in comparison with children from intact families, and in the magnitude of any difference found. See generally J Pryor and B Rodgers, *Children in Changing Families: Life after Parental Separation* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2001). In the following article, Joan Kelly and Bob Emery summarise the research on separation as a risk factor for children, and the factors that make a difference to children in the long term.

### Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives

[22.70] J Kelly and R Emery, "Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives" (2003) 52 *Family Relations* 352 at 355-358.

#### Divorce as Risk for Children

A large body of empirical research confirms that divorce increases the risk for adjustment problems in children and adolescents. Children of divorce were significantly more likely to have behavioral, internalizing, social, and academic problems when compared with children from intact families.

*Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives cont.*

greater risk for these negative outcomes than girls in several studies, no gender differences specifically linked to divorce were found in other studies. The complex interaction between gender, age at separation, pre-separation adjustment, sex of custodial parent, quality of relationships with both parents, and extent of conflict confounds efforts to clarify findings regarding gender.

Children in divorced families have lower academic performance and achievement test scores compared with children in continuously married families. The differences are modest and decrease but do not disappear, when income and socioeconomic status are controlled. Children from divorced families are two to three times more likely to drop out of school than are children of intact families, and the risk of teenage childbearing is doubled. However, it appears that youngsters are already at risk for poorer educational performance and lowered expectations well before separation. For example, the risk for school dropout is associated with poverty or low income prior to separation, and this may be exacerbated by the further decline in economic resources following separation. Further, in looking at parental resources available to children prior to separation, parents provided less financial, social, human, and cultural capital to their children compared with parents who remained married, and parent-child relationships were less positive. Adolescents from divorced families scored lower on tests of math and reading both prior to and after parental separation compared with adolescents in married families, and their parents were less involved in their adolescents' education.

The increased risk of divorced children for behavioral problems is not diminished by remarriage. As with divorce, children in stepfamily homes are twice as likely to have psychological, behavioral, social and academic problems than are children in nondivorced families.

Children from divorced families have more difficulties in their intimate relationships as young adults. Compared with young adults in continuously married families, young adults from divorced families marry earlier, report more dissatisfaction with their marriages, and are more likely to divorce. Relationships between divorced parents and their adult children also are less affectionate and supportive than those in continuously married families. When divorced parents denigrated the other parent in front of the children, young adults were more likely to report angry and less close relationships with the denigrating parents. Somewhat surprising is the finding that young adults whose parents had low-conflict marriages and then divorced had more problems with intimate relationships, less social support of friends and relatives, and lower psychological well-being compared with children whose high-conflict parents divorced. Parents in low-conflict marriages who divorced differed in certain dimensions, including less integration in the community and more risky behaviors, and this may place their children at greater risk. Further research is needed to understand the aspects of parenting and parent-child relationships in these low-conflict marriages that negatively affect the later relationships of their offspring.

Higher divorce rates for children of divorced families compared with those in still-married families are substantiated in a number of studies. The risk of divorce for these young adults is related to socioeconomic factors, as well as life course decisions such as cohabitation, early marriage, and premarital childbearing; attitudes toward marriage and divorce; and interpersonal behaviors, all of which are associated with marital instability. The number and cumulative effect of family structure transitions is linked to the higher probability of divorce; three or more transitions (divorce, remarriage, redi-  
 vorce) greatly increase the risk of offspring divorce.

*Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives cont.**Competent Custodial Parents and Parenting*

Living in the custody of a competent, adequately functioning parent is a protective factor associated with positive outcomes in children. Overall, one of the best predictors of children's psychological functioning in the marriage and after divorce is the psychological adjustment of custodial parents (usually mothers) and the quality of parenting provided by them. A particular cluster of parental behaviors following divorce is an important protective factor as well. When custodial parents provide warmth, emotional support, adequate monitoring, discipline authoritatively, and maintain appropriate expectations, children and adolescents experience positive adjustment compared with children whose divorced custodial parents are inattentive, less supportive, and use coercive disciplinary strategies.

There is a potential protective benefit from the timely and appropriate parenting of nonresident parents. Frequency of visits between fathers and children generally is not a reliable predictor of children's outcomes, because frequency alone does not reflect the quality of the father-child relationship. In one study, boys and younger children, but not girls or older children, were better adjusted with frequent and regular contact with their fathers. In the context of low conflict, frequent visits between fathers and children is associated with better child adjustment, but where interparental conflict is intense, more frequent visits were linked to poorer adjustment, presumably because of opportunities for more direct exposure of the children to parental aggression and pressures.

Frequency of contact also has beneficial effects when certain features of parenting are present in nonresident parents. A meta-analysis of 57 studies found that children who had close relationships with their fathers benefited from frequent contacts when their fathers remained actively involved in parenting. When fathers helped with homework and projects, provided authoritative parenting, and had appropriate expectations for their children, the children had more positive adjustment and academic performance than did those with less involved fathers. More paternal involvement in children's schooling was also associated with better grades and fewer repeated grades and suspensions.

The combination of fathers engaging in activities with their children and providing financial support was associated with increased probability of completing high school and entering college compared with activities alone or activities combined with very low financial support. Indeed, when both parents engage in active, authoritative, competent parenting, adolescent boys from divorced families had a greater involvement in delinquent behavior than did those in continuously married families.

New reports about joint custody, compared with sole custody, also suggest a protective effect for some children. A meta-analysis of 33 studies of sole- and joint-physical custody studies reported that children in joint-custody arrangements were better adjusted on multiple objective measures, including general adjustment, emotional and behavioral adjustment, and academic achievement compared with children in sole-custody arrangements. In fact, children in joint custody were better adjusted regardless of the level of conflict between parents, and they did not differ in adjustment from children in still-married families. Although the joint-custody parents had less conflict prior to separation and after divorce than did sole custody parents, these differences did not affect the advantage of joint custody. Lee also reported positive effects of dual residence on children's behavior adjustment, although the effects were suppressed by high interparental conflict and children's distress.

*Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives cont.*

higher levels of conflict, protective factors include a good relationship with at least one parent or caregiver; parental warmth; and the ability of parents to encapsulate their conflict. Several studies found no differences in the amount of conflict between parents in sole- or joint-custody arrangements, although results from a meta-analysis found more conflict in sole-custody families prior to and after divorce.

Most parents diminish their conflict in the first 2–3 years after divorce as they become disengaged and establish their separate (or remarried) lives. Studies indicate that between 8% and 12% of parents continue high conflict 2–3 years after divorce. The relatively small group of chronically contentious and litigating parents are more likely to be emotionally disturbed, character-disordered men and women who are intent on vengeance and/or on controlling their former spouses and their parenting. Such parents use disproportionate resources and time in family courts, and their children are more likely to be exposed to parental aggression. When one or both parents continue to lash out during transitions between households, mediation experience indicates that children can be protected from this exposure through access arrangements that incorporate transfers at neutral points (e.g., school, day care).

Related to the level of conflict between parents postdivorce is the effect of the coparental relationship. Research shows that between 25% and 30% of parents have a cooperative coparental relationship characterized by joint planning, flexibility, sufficient communication, and coordination of scheduled and activities. However, more than half of parents engage in parallel parenting, in which low conflict, low communication, and emotional disengagement are typical features. Although there are distinct advantages of cooperative coparenting for children, children thrive as well in parallel parenting relationships when parents are providing nurturing care and appropriate discipline in each household.

**Resilience of Children of Divorce**

Despite the increased risk reported for children from divorced families, the current consensus in the social science literature is that the majority of children whose parents divorced are not distinguishable from their peers whose parents remained married in the longer term. There is considerable overlap between groups of children and adolescents in married and postdivorce families, with some divorced (and remarried) children functioning quite well in all dimensions, and some children in married families experiencing severe psychological, social, and academic difficulties. Whereas a slight widening of the differences between children from married and divorced families is found in studies in the 1990s, the magnitude of the differences remains small. Both large-scale studies with nationally representative samples and multimethod longitudinal studies using widely accepted psychological and social measures and statistics indicate that the majority of children of divorce continue to fall within the average range of adjustment.

Not to minimize the stresses and risk to children that separation and divorce create, it is important to emphasize that approximately 75–80% of children and young adults do not suffer from major psychological problems, including depression; have achieved their education and career goals, and retain close ties to their families. They enjoy intimate relationships, have not divorced, and do not appear to be scarred with immutable negative effects from divorce.

2. As Kelly and Emery note, parental conflict does not necessarily end on separation, furthermore, children can experience high levels of conflict in single-parent families and stepfamilies. A large Australian study has found that young people report significantly higher levels of conflict in stepfamilies and lone-parent families than in intact families. Stepfamilies in particular create new sources of tension. See P Mance and P Yu, "Conflict, Relationship Transitions and Conflict: Explaining Outcomes for Australian Youth in Non-intact Families" (2010) 27 *Journal of Population Research* 75.

3. Children of separated parents are much more likely to experience child abuse and neglect than children in intact families, in part because of the elevated risk arising from partnerships with men who are not biologically related to the child. See generally Berger, C Paxson and J Waldfogel, "Mothers, Men, and Child Protective Service Involvement" (2009) 14 *Child Maltreatment* 263. For a review of the studies on sexual abuse, see R Wilson, "Children at Risk: The Sexual Exploitation of Female Children after Divorce" (2001) 86 *Cornell Law Review* 251. On child homicide, see Harris, Z Hilton, M Rice and A Eke, "Children Killed by Genetic Parents Versus Stepparents" (2007) 28 *Evolution and Human Behavior* 85.

[2.80] Would those children who are adversely affected by parental separation have a better off if the parents had remained together? A major longitudinal study suggests divorce itself leaves a majority of children worse off than if they had stayed together. Furthermore, the researchers found that the divorce itself has negative effects apart from effects of the marital discord which preceded it.

**A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval**

[2.85] P Amato and A Booth, *A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1997), pp 219–220.

Amato and Booth conducted a longitudinal study of parents and children interviewed over a 15-year period. A nationally representative sample of over 2,000 married individuals was surveyed in 1983. Either the husband or the wife was chosen (randomly) to be interviewed. As many people as could be traced from the original sample were then interviewed again every three or four years until 1992. The re-interview rate was 78% in 1983, 84% in 1988 and 89% in 1992. By 1992, many of these couples had divorced. In 1992, and again in 1995, the researchers interviewed the children (now adults) of those married people whom they had first interviewed in 1980. The following is taken from the concluding chapter.]

Our data show that the long-term consequences of interparental discord for children are pervasive and consistently detrimental. Poor marital quality, as well as declines in marital quality over time, are associated with problematic relationships with mothers and fathers (less affection, less consensus, perceived support, and less help exchanged); more difficulties in dating among single offspring (fewer dates, more difficulty finding dating partners, and less happiness with current dating partner); lower marital quality among married offspring (less happiness, less interaction, more conflict, more

*A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval cont.*

generated by our analyses are not large, even modest declines in well-being, spread across numbers of offspring, reflect a serious social deficit. If marital quality is indeed declining in the United States, the prospects for the future are not encouraging.

Parental divorce also appears to have negative consequences for offspring, although these are not as pervasive as the effects of parents' marital quality. Parental divorce is associated with more problematic parent-child relationships (less affection, less consensus, less contact, and less perceived support), an increased probability of divorce among married offspring; and lower socioeconomic attainment (lower education, lower occupational status, and greater economic adversity). Furthermore, these associations are independent of pre-divorce conflict between parents. In other words, for these outcomes, low parental marital quality lowers offspring well-being, and parental divorce lowers [it] even further. However, our longitudinal analyses suggest that some of the consequences of divorce depend on the level of marital conflict that precedes it. When marital conflict is low in 1980, parental divorce between 1980 and 1992 is associated with lower social integration (fewer friends and kin), lower marital quality among married offspring, and lower psychological well-being (greater psychological distress and lower happiness). But when marital conflict is high in 1980, parental divorce between 1980 and 1992 is associated with positive outcomes. It appears that parental divorce benefits children in certain ways if it removes them from a discordant parental household ...

This finding raises an interesting question: What proportion of divorces are preceded by a long period of overt interparental conflict, and hence, are beneficial to children? From our own data we estimate that less than a third of parental divorces involve highly conflicted marriages. Only 28 per cent of parents who divorced during the study reported any sort of spousal physical abuse prior to divorce, 30 per cent reported that they disagreed "often" or "very often" with their spouses. Thus, it would appear that only a minority of divorces between 1980 and 1992 involve high-conflict marriages.

If divorce were limited only to high-conflict marriages, then divorce would generally be in children's best interest. But the fact that one-half of all marriages today end in divorce suggests that this is not the case. Instead, with marital dissolution becoming increasingly socially acceptable, it is likely that people are leaving marriages at lower thresholds of unhappiness now than in the past. Unfortunately, these are the very divorces that are most likely to be stressful for children. Consequently, we conclude that the rise in marital disruption, although beneficial to some children, has, in balance, been detrimental to children.

— SOCOR —

**[22.90]****Notes & Questions**

1. One of the most influential writers on the effects of divorce is J Wallerstein. She tended to emphasise the negative aspects of parental separation for children. Her books include *Wallerstein and J Kelly, Surviving the Break Up: How Children and Parents Cope with the Divorce* (Basic Books, New York, 1996); J Wallerstein and S Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade after Divorce* (Ticknor & Fields, New York, 1989); J Wallerstein, J Lewis and S Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study* (Hyperion, New York, 2000). Wallerstein's work had no control group.

3. What are the implications, if any, of this psychological research for government policy families?

**CHILDREN AND NON-RESIDENT PARENTS***Every other weekend and half the school holidays*

**[22.95]** For many years, a traditional pattern of parenting arrangements following separation and divorce has been for the children to be in the primary care of one parent and to spend time with the other parent every other weekend and half the school holidays. In the following extract, one of the world's leading authorities on parenting after separation, Dr Joan Kelly explains why this standard pattern is inadequate for many children following separation.

**Developing Beneficial Parenting Plan Models for Children Following Separation and Divorce**

**[22.100]** J Kelly, "Developing Beneficial Parenting Plan Models for Children Following Separation and Divorce" (2005) 19 *Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers* 237 at 239-241, 2

*Problems with Traditional Visiting Patterns and Guidelines*

For reasons not entirely clear, the specific visiting pattern of every other weekend with the nonresident parent, usually the father, became the favored and traditional arrangement for children following separation. This alternating weekend pattern may have gained favor because it was easy to apply requiring no judicial or psychological analysis. It simply divided the child's leisure time during school year between parents, assigning divorced mothers all the work of raising children, including discipline, homework, and childcare, and typically excluding fathers from these normal parent responsibilities and opportunities. In the 1980's, as the courts gradually adopted best interest standards as a basis for determining custody and access arrangements following separation, primary caretaker guideline, with every other weekend visits with the nonresident parent, became accepted definition of children's "best interests," in formal and informal visiting guidelines in many jurisdictions in the United States and elsewhere.

Such guidelines are inherently flawed because of the one-size-fits-all standard, and because they not in fact, address the best interests of many children. They failed to consider children's age, gender, and developmental needs and achievements, the history and quality of the child's relations with each parent, quality of parenting, and family situations requiring special attention. Rigid adherence to such prescriptive guidelines most often resulted in those children with a weak and supportive relationship with their nonresidential fathers restricted to seeing their fathers only for out of each twenty-eight days, because of the default use of the guidelines, the same amount of time as for children with a self-absorbed, disinterested, or emotionally abusive father. Children accustomed to interacting with a parent on a daily basis were suddenly required, as a sole result of the parent separation, to wait twelve days before seeing that parent for forty-eight hours, and then wait, again, another twelve days for the next forty-eight hour contact. This protracted separation from loved parent caused great anguish and confusion for many children, particularly for the young



is remarkable that professionals in the field of mental health did not anticipate the devastating impact that this odd and restrictive schedule would have on children's emotional well-being and their future relationships with their visiting parents. It is even more striking that as divorce research convincingly demonstrated how inadequate and child-unfriendly such guidelines and rules were, they persisted with such tenacity, including to the present day...

#### *Children's Views about Access and Father Involvement*

Over three decades, children have routinely reported the loss of one parent as the most negative aspect of divorce, and with the passage of time, have described their fathers as increasingly peripheral to their lives: no longer involved in discipline, or providing emotional support, more like an uncle or distant relative.

Father-child relationships weaken and deteriorate over time as a result of limited time with each other, as well as gradual paternal withdrawal, continued anger and co-parental conflict, and moves to new locations. Based on early research, statutes appeared in the 1980's stressing children's needs for frequent and continuing contact with their nonresidential parent, however, alternating weekend visitation remained the standard pattern in most jurisdictions.

In more recent studies, approximately half of children state a desire for more contact with their fathers, about half think the amount of current contact is just about right, and one-third want the contacts to be longer. Two percent wanted less contact, typically when fathers were difficult, angry, or disinterested. Retrospective studies of adolescent and young adult views regarding what type of parenting plans they would have liked when they were younger indicate that between one-third and one-half of these seasoned divorced youngsters wanted equal time with both parents, or at least a substantial number of overnights with the nonresident parent.

#### [22.105]

#### Notes & Questions

1. Kelly calls for a differentiated approach to parenting plans, which involves taking account of the age and stage of development of children, and the relationship between the child and the parent.
2. Why do you think lawyers and courts adopted such standardised patterns of parent-child contact following separation?
3. A great many children of divorce also report as young adults the yearning for more time with fathers: W Fabricius and J Hall, "Young Adults' Perspectives on Divorce: Living Arrangements" (2000) 38 *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* 446; L Laumann-Billings, and R Emery, "Distress Among Young Adults from Divorced Families" (2000) 14 *Journal of Family Psychology* 671. For evidence from an Australian study, see P Parkinson, J Cashmore and J Single, "Adolescents' Views on the Fairness of Parenting and Financial Arrangements After Separation" (2005) 43 *Family Court Review* 430.

### Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-being: A Meta-analysis

[22.115] P Amato and J Gilbreth, "Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-being: A Meta-analysis" (1999) 61 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 557 at 557-558, 565, 569-570.

Do nonresident fathers contribute anything of value, other than money, to their children's lives? Based on the social science research conducted to date, one might be inclined to answer this question negatively. Amato summarized 32 studies of divorce that reported data on contact with noncustodial fathers and children's well-being. Of these studies, 15 found that contact was associated significantly and positively with children's well-being, seven found that contact was associated significantly and negatively with children's well-being, and 10 found no significant association. Mixed results such as these have led many social scientists to reach pessimistic conclusions about the importance of nonresident fathers. For example, Seltzer noted that "large national surveys consistently show an absence of association between nonresident fathers' visits and children's well-being". Similarly, McLanahan and Sandefur stated that "studies based on large, nationally representative surveys indicate that frequent father contact has no detectable benefits for children". Because of this lack of evidence, Furstenberg and Cherlin were "cautious about drawing any firm conclusions about the psychological benefits of contact with noncustodial parents for children's adjustment in later life".

In contrast to the weak evidence for visitation, evidence is stronger for fathers' payment of child support. Reviews of the literature by Furstenberg and Cherlin, McLanahan and Sandefur, Seltzer and others consistently point out the importance of increasing the number of child support awards made to single mothers, raising the amount of awards, and enforcing awards more strictly. All these recommendations are based on the assumption that nonresidential fathers' economic contributions not only increase children's standard of living, but also improve children's health, educational attainment, and general well-being. Many empirical studies support this assumption.

Why does research suggest beneficial effects on children when nonresident fathers pay child support, yet fail to suggest beneficial effects when nonresident fathers visit their children? These results appear to contradict a substantial body of research showing that positive father involvement in two-parent households contributes to children's development, well-being, and attainment. It is possible that nonresident fathers are less salient figures than resident fathers in the lives of children. But this conclusion clashes with qualitative studies showing that many children in single-mother households think highly of their fathers and wish for more frequent contact. Indeed, it may be useful to begin with the assumption that nonresident fathers have the potential to benefit children and then to consider why existing studies have failed to provide supporting evidence.

This way of framing the problem suggests the possibility that researchers have focused their attention on the "wrong" dimension of father involvement. The majority of studies have measured frequency of visitation. But frequency of contact may be less important than other relationship dimensions, such as the strength of the emotional tie between children and fathers. For example, Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dambusch found that adolescents' feelings of closeness to their noncustodial fathers were positively associated with adolescents' psychological and behavioral adjustment. Feelings of closeness to fathers, however, were only modestly correlated with the frequency of visitation.

Another relevant dimension may be the extent to which fathers practice authoritative parenting. Many fathers take their children to restaurants and movies, yet fail to engage in authoritative practices, such as helping with homework, talking about problems, or setting limits. Not sharing a residence with

*Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-being: A Meta-analysis cont.*

Our goal in the study presented here was to provide a more comprehensive picture of how dimensions of the nonresident father-child relationship are linked with children's well-being. Rather than collect new data, however, we used meta-analytic methods to summarize and organize data from 63 prior studies. We carried out analyses separately for four dimensions of paternal involvement: payment of child support, frequency of contact, feeling close, and authoritative parenting. We also considered how a variety of contextual factors might moderate the impact of father involvement. A systematic organizing of the literature on nonresident fathers has the potential to provide a stronger conceptual and empirical foundation for future studies ...

[Findings on authoritative parenting]: The mean weighted effect sizes were statistically significant for all child outcomes, indicating that children tended to have higher academic achievement, fewer externalizing problems, and fewer internalizing problems if nonresident fathers exhibited behaviours reflecting authoritative parenting. These results support the hypothesis that nonresident fathers' authoritative parenting benefits children ...

In summary, our results provide both continuity and discontinuity with previous literature reviews. Consistent with the conclusions of previous reviews, children appear to benefit when fathers pay child support. And, consistent with previous reviews, children appear to benefit little when fathers maintain frequent contact. These results go beyond previous reviews, however, in revealing that both the strength of the emotional tie between children and fathers and the extent to which fathers engage in authoritative parenting are related to children's well-being. Indeed of the four dimensions of fathering, authoritative parenting was the most consistent predictor of child outcomes ...

Our meta-analysis suggests that how often fathers see children is less important than what fathers do when they are with their children. Apparently, many men who see their children frequently are not engaging in authoritative parenting. Why not? One explanation points to the constraints of traditional visitation arrangements. Research indicates that many nonresident fathers have primarily recreational relationships with children. Because of time constraints, most fathers want to ensure that their children enjoy themselves. Consequently, many fathers take their children to restaurants or movies but do not engage in authoritative practices, such as helping with homework or talking over personal problems. In addition, nonresident fathers who maintain frequent contact tend to be relatively permissive and indulgent. Because these men fear that their relationships with children are tenuous, they often are reluctant to set firm rules or to discipline their children for misbehavior. The activities shared by nonresident fathers and their children may be enjoyable, but these activities, in the absence of authoritative parenting, contribute little to children's development. Indeed, many nonresident fathers complain that their visitation arrangements are insufficient to maintain anything other than a superficial relationship with their children.

Nevertheless, the fact that some nonresident fathers are able to maintain close and authoritative relationships with children indicates that something other than visitation arrangements must be standing in the way of effective parenting. According to Lamb, to be competent fathers, men must have a strong commitment to the role of parent, as well as appropriate parenting skills. Nonresident fathers who are not highly motivated to enact the parental role or who lack the skills to be effective parents are unlikely to benefit their children, even under conditions of regular visitation.

Our meta-analysis provides suggestive evidence that nonresident fathers are acting in a more authoritative fashion now than in the past, as reflected in the upward shift in effect sizes for contact

*Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-being: A Meta-analysis cont.*

each parent will adopt. Moving away from traditional notions of custody may be a useful step to increasing fathers' incentives and opportunities for positive participation in their children's lives. A recent longitudinal study by Seltzer showed that nonresident fathers with joint legal custody visit their children more often and had more overnight visits than other nonresident fathers, even controlling for a range of demographic characteristics and the father's level of involvement prior to divorce. This finding suggests that policies that encourage nonresident fathers to maintain a parental role after divorce can positively influence men's behavior. In addition, the adoption of educational programs for divorcing parents (especially programs that stress the importance of cooperative parenting) may improve some men's ability to act in an authoritative fashion. In these programs have been introduced in many courts, and the majority of parents (fathers, as well as mothers) claim to have found them worthwhile.

Of course, when fathers are abusive or have substance abuse problems, most children are better off with minimal contact. And encouraging greater father involvement should not be done in a manner that disadvantages mothers. Nevertheless, new demographic realities mean that we need a better understanding of how nonresident fathers can contribute to their children's lives. We need policies that remove potential barriers to these contributions. The fact that policy appears to be moving in a direction that encourages the transmission of nonresident fathers' social – as well as financial resources to children is encouraging.

— 2003 —

**[22.120]**

1. What do Amato and Gilbreth mean by authoritative parenting?

2. What role do they see the law might play in encouraging authoritative parenting by non-resident parent after relationship breakdown?

3. Why do you think the frequency of contact, in itself, is not a significant factor in children's outcomes?

**Notes & Questions*****The importance of unstructured time***

[22.125] Amato and Gilbreth emphasise that “how often fathers see children is less important than what fathers do when they are with their children”. A certain amount of time with a child is a precondition to establishing and maintaining close relationships, but it does not guarantee that close relationships will be formed. In Australia, there have been extensive debates about the quantity of time that children should spend with each parent: see House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, *Every Picture Tells a Story: Report on the Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation* (Parliament of Australia, Canberra, 2003). The House of Representatives Committee, known as the “Hull Committee” were critical of an assumption that non-resident

the focus should not be on quantity of time but on the experience of time. They point to the importance for parents and children of unstructured time “hanging out together” in facilitating close parent–child relationships.

### Exploring Options for Parental Care of Children Following Separation

[22.130] B Smyth and R Chisholm, “Exploring Options for Parental Care of Children Following Separation: A Primer for Family Law Specialists” (2006) 20 *Australian Journal of Family Law* 193, 214–216.

*Thinking about time as an experience – not a number*

What is most striking about the recent debate in Australia on shared care after divorce is that it has largely centred on numbers – 50/50, 80/20, 70/30, and 60/40 time splits. Of course, time is typically expressed in quantity, which makes number essential in its articulation. Also, court orders cannot realistically prescribe what should happen when the children are in the care of each parent: court orders are limited to such matters as the duration of periods with each parent and arrangements for the children to be collected and returned, and, in some cases, specific matters such as restraining a parent from using drugs or alcohol while the children are in that parent’s care. Given the practical limitations of court orders – whether by consent or after a hearing – it is understandable that the focus of discussion can be on such matters as the duration and frequency of periods with each parent, and their expression as percentages. It is likely, too, that the relevance of percentages of time to child support liability – and property division, which is all about numeric splits – contributes to a focus on this aspect.

But this apparent preoccupation with time as a number in family law can cause separated parents to lose sight of what actually *happens* while the children are with each parent. This is a problem, because negotiations and discussions should settle the time periods in a way that will (among other things) contribute most to the quality of the child’s experiences with each parent. Both for parents and children, the quality of the experiences while interacting seems to be of great importance. For example, it seems that for non-resident fathers, time with children is often experienced as stilted, shallow, artificial and brief; while for resident mothers, time with children may often be experienced as fluid, deep, demanding, and a given. It is interesting to note that for children, it is the quality of the relationship with parents that matters, not slices of time.

According to Kelly and Lamb, the greater the range of contexts for interaction between parents and their children, the better. They suggest that different contexts facilitate children’s social, emotional and cognitive development, and afford greater opportunities for parents to build emotional bonds with their children. It is the intermingling of different activities – and the different experiences of time that diverse contexts bring – that form the hub of family life, and which are critical for family wellbeing. For instance, *overnight stays* allow for the experience of mundane everyday routines, as well as special moments – such as putting children to bed, reading to them, saying good night, and starting the day together over breakfast. Such activities as playing a game, talking in the car, reading together, or helping with homework send a clear signal to children that they matter, and can also be satisfying to the parents, who feel, correctly, that they are providing something of real value to the children, and building an increasingly secure and enduring relationship with the children. Outdoor

### Exploring Options for Parental Care of Children Following Separation ... cont.

An undue focus on specific activities, however, can lead us to overlook something that can be extremely important for children’s and parent’s wellbeing, namely *unstructured time*. This type of time involves unstructured, intimate time where a parent and child are free to “hang out” and get into a moment, talk about things, or engage in activities that are important to them (such as a teen daughter talking about boyfriend problems while her father peels potatoes). Post-separation parent arrangements that involve brief periods of parent–child time, such as daytime-only contact on Saturday afternoon, though valuable, can lack the special benefits that can be gained during relaxed and unstructured situations that create the conditions for free-flowing interpersonal engagement. In many ways, unstructured time that flows represents the Holy Grail for many separated parents and their children because it brings into awareness the kind of closeness, warmth, and mutual understanding that remain elusive when parenting from a distance.

Could it be that the desire for 50/50 care of children after divorce by many non-resident fathers is really a proxy for the yearning for “being” time with children? Could the apparent obsession with numbers (hours, days, time splits) in the context of caring for children after separation reflect a deep concern about what that time might mean: time to develop more closeness with a child; time to continue or generate an intimate satisfying relationship; time to strengthen, enhance or even maintain one’s identity as a “father” or “mother”?

The benefits of unstructured time stem from spontaneous interactions, and cannot be specified or prescribed in advance. But parenting time can nonetheless be structured in ways that encourage the experience of different types of time with children – ways that create the likelihood of unstructured time. Structuring parenting time in such a way that allows time to be porous is often not easy at separation because of the difficulties inherent in allocating time to meet the diverse desires and needs of all family members. But it is possible. Legal professionals can help to remind parents of this.

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#### [22.135]

#### Notes & Questions

1. Smyth and Chisholm say that for non-resident fathers, “time with children is often experienced as stilted, shallow, artificial and brief”. Assuming that the parents live close enough to one another to make frequent contact possible, how do you think parent time could be structured to facilitate more meaningful relationships with non-resident parents?
2. Looking back on your childhood, how important was unstructured time in your relationship with your parents?

#### Shared parenting

[22.140] Shared parenting is one way of maintaining the involvement of both parents in the lives of children, and as previous extracts have indicated, it has benefits for many children. Shared parenting can take many forms and involve a variety of time-sharing arrangements. One popular approach is for a week about arrangement. That is, the children live with mu

schedules realistically accommodate such an arrangement without children spending long periods in child care or out of school hours care? Australian research confirms the findings of some other jurisdictions that shared care arrangements often do not last.

In the following report on shared care, the researchers review the evidence concerning shared care arrangements after the 2006 reforms.

## Shared Care Parenting Arrangements Since the 2006 Family Law Reforms

[22.145] J Cashmore, P Parkinson, R Weston, R Patulny, G Redmond, L Qu, J Baxter, M Rajkovic, I Sitek and I Katz, *Shared Care Parenting Arrangements Since the 2006 Family Law Reforms: Report to the Australian Government, Attorney-General's Department* (Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2010), pp 139-143.

### *The prevalence of shared care*

All the datasets examined suggest that the prevalence of shared care among separated parents is quite low, and lower than in many other jurisdictions where statistics are available. However, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the proportion engaging in shared care has increased in recent years. In 1997, less than 1% of children whose parents did not live together were in equal time arrangements. By 2006-07 this had risen to 4%. More children live in substantially shared care arrangements. With the reforms to the Child Support Scheme following the report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support, the standard definition of shared care is at least 35% of nights with each parent. Nearly 8% of children were in shared care using this definition, compared with 2.6% of children in 1997. This is consistent with findings from other datasets and studies.

Parents who are more recently separated appear more likely than other parents to engage in a shared care or near shared care arrangement. A quarter of all parents who separated between two different waves of the LSAC survey (that is between the time when the child was 4-5 and when the child was 6-7) had a shared care arrangement. The Parents' Survey indicates the same pattern. Families in shared care arrangements were more likely to have separated in the past four years. Among those who adopt a shared care arrangement at some stage, adjustments tend to be made after about two years.

The percentage of parents in shared care arrangements reported in the ABS data is significantly lower than in the evaluation of the family law reforms conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Kaspiew et al, 2009). The AIFS found that 16% had a shared care arrangement and just under half of these (7%) had an equal time arrangement. However, the picture is a consistent one. The AIFS evaluation focused on those who had separated since July 1 2006, when the changes to the Family Law Act 1975 were introduced. The ABS data analysed in this report indicates patterns of care across the population of separated parents, including those who separated many years ago and still have children under 18. Because shared care has become a more common arrangement in recent years, and also because it is likely to be tried particularly in the first few years after separation, it is to be expected that any study of recently separated parents would yield a higher proportion of shared care arrangements than in the population as a whole.

### *The duration of shared care*

Many shared care arrangements do not last. Over time, the pattern of care often reverts to the more

## Shared Care Parenting Arrangements Since the 2006 Family Law Reforms cont.

It is not surprising that some families try shared care soon after separation but change to another arrangement in the course of time. In the aftermath of separation, parents may well live in reasonable proximity to one another. For example, a father might move out of the family home to live in a neighbouring suburb, or another area of the same town. Proximity is a precondition for shared care and such an arrangement may work for a while. However, if the family home has to be sold, or it is not possible for the parents to afford two homes in the area where once they had only one, one or both parents will have to move to an area where housing is cheaper. In Australia's major cities, those are likely to be on the edges of the city or beyond it, and so separation has a centrifugal effect on many parents, scattering them through economic necessity from the more central areas of a city to its out-edges or beyond. If one parent is tied to their original location because of work commitments or other such factors, the economic consequences of the separation may mean that parents come to live some distance from one another.

Such economic factors are one reason why a shared care arrangement may not last. Repartnering and other life changes are other reasons why some form of shared care, which was practicable in the immediate aftermath of separation, ceases to be so as time goes on ...

### *The wellbeing of children in shared care*

The research indicated many positive aspects of shared care or near-shared care for children's wellbeing. Compared to those with other care arrangements, the shared-care families tended to have higher levels of cooperation between the parents and more joint decision-making. However, in a significant proportion of these families, disharmony in relationships and parenting was apparent during the parenting time makes it more likely that parents will share decision-making, but it does not guarantee this. For example, in Wave 1 of LSAC, which reported on parenting arrangements for 4-5 year old children, 35% of mothers in shared care or near shared care arrangements said that the father, almost never or never consulted the other parent on child-rearing matters.

The Parents' Survey showed that compared with other forms of care, parents in shared care have lower levels of conflict. The only significant differences, however, were for fathers who reported less conflict when they had shared care arrangements than when their children spent more time with their mother, "mostly mother" and 100% with mother). There were no significant differences for mother's level of conflict over money was higher for those in shared care than for those who had the children with them all or most of the time. Conflict over child-rearing tends to be lower for fathers with shared care arrangements than in the other arrangements. For mothers in shared care, the reported conflict over child-rearing is lower than for those whose children are with their fathers all or most of the time.

Fathers in shared care arrangements were less likely to report concerns about their own safety, than parents with other types of care arrangements. The same was true of fathers, who reported fewer safety concerns overall.

Parents in shared care also have fewer safety concerns for their children than in other patterns of care since parents who have significant safety concerns about the children while in the other parent's care are less likely to agree to have shared care arrangements, it is not surprising that in this research, safety concerns are lowest for the shared care group. However, it should be noted that in the AIFS evaluation of the family law reforms (Kaspiew et al, 2009, p.166), both mothers and fathers reported concern



### Shared Care Parenting Arrangements Since the 2006 Family Law Reforms cont.

ie children mostly in their care (66-99% of the time) except where they held serious concerns about ie safety of the children. The pattern is similar for mothers' reports of conflict. The proportion of mothers who reported that shared care arrangements were working badly was not significantly different from mothers with "mostly mother" arrangements where there was low or even medium vels of conflict. However, the picture is quite different, when they report high levels of conflict. Thus here mothers have serious concerns about the safety of their children or there is high conflict, they e more likely to report negative outcomes for children than when the children are in their own care imarily.

others who had concerns about the safety of the children or who reported high conflict were more ely to report negative outcomes than those mothers who had concerns about their own safety. owever, where mothers held some concerns about their own safety (but did not report serious ncerns), those in shared care arrangements were twice as likely to report negatively compared with ose where the children were with them most of the time. Where mothers held serious levels of ncern for their own safety, there was little difference between mothers in shared care and when the ildren lived primarily with them.

rents in shared or near shared care arrangements in general held favourable views about their rangements, with the great majority indicating that their arrangements worked for father, mother/ id children. These patterns were apparent for both fathers and mothers. However, not all those rents or children who were in shared care arrangements were happy with it. About 10% of fathers id mothers in shared or near shared care considered their arrangements did not work for their ildren.

any children who were in shared care arrangements reported positive benefits from shared care. deed, a number of the children who were not in shared care wanted more time with their n-resident parent (mainly fathers) and some specifically wanted a shared care arrangement. owever, just as there were some children who would have liked to be in an equal time arrangement, here were children who were in such arrangements who wanted to live primarily with one parent. ildren consistently reported that they would like to be involved in the decision making about their ire arrangement, and not surprisingly children tended to be more satisfied with arrangements when ey felt that their views had been taken into account.

ildren in shared care indicated that they felt closer to their mother than to their father, but they ere no less close to their mothers than children living with their mothers most of the time. They ported that the main benefit of shared care was maintaining a relationship with both parents. ving equal time was also seen to be fair. Having some respite from one parent in the move to the her was also a perceived benefit for some children. The costs or disadvantages of shared care for ildren were the moves back and forth, the lack of one place to call home, especially with the mands of the senior years of high school, and the risk of leaving things behind. Some children rceived these to be issues for them, while others did not.

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## 2.1501

### Notes & Questions

. For other Australian research that indicates that many shared care arrangements do not

example, found in two studies conducted after the 2006 reforms to the FLA that shared care arrangements in high conflict families were associated with elevated levels of anxiety in some children. McIntosh and Chisholm expressed caution about shared parenting in high conflict cases on the basis of these findings: J McIntosh and R Chisholm, "Cautionary Notes on the Shared Care of Children in Conflicted Parental Separation" (2008) 14 *Journal of Family Studies* 37. See also J McIntosh, "Legislating for Shared Parenting: Exploring Some Underlying Assumptions", (2009) 47 *Family Court Review* 389.

3. Is there a difference between being in conflict about the parenting arrangements, and being in conflict as parents?
4. As Kelly and Emery indicate (see [22.70]), most parents diminish their conflict in the first 2-3 years after divorce as they become disengaged and establish their separate (or remarried) lives. However, a small minority persist in ongoing and entrenched conflict. What implications might that have for decision-making about shared parenting when the parents are in high conflict over the parenting arrangements?
5. Another serious issue is family violence. The AIFS study (R Kaspiew, M Gray, R Weston, L Moloney, K Hand and L Qu, *Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2009) found that families where there was a reported history of physical violence or emotional abuse were as likely to have shared care-time arrangements as those where there were no such reports (pp 164-165). It was not only mothers in shared care arrangements who had safety concerns. While 16% of mothers who reported equal time arrangements had concerns about their own safety or the safety of the child in the father's care, the percentage of fathers expressing such concerns about the safety of the child in the mother's care was higher (17.9%). In the shared care cases where the mother had care of the child or children for the majority of the time (53-65% of nights), 19.4% of mothers and 16.2% of fathers expressed concerns about their own safety or the safety of the child in the other parent's care. In the smaller number of shared care cases where the father had care of the child or children for the majority of the time, 20% of fathers and no mothers expressed such safety concerns (Kaspiew et al, 2009, p 166). Not all these concerns relate to family violence or child abuse perpetrated by the other parent. The safety concerns could also be about harm inflicted by someone other than the other parent, such as a new partner or a relative.
6. Recent research has found that the proportion of parents who have shared time arrangements involving 30% of nights or more with each parent, and who report "lots of conflict" or "fearful" relationships, has declined significantly since 2006, falling from 32% of parents who separated in 2006 to 19% of parents who separated in 2009: B Smyth, R Chisholm, B Rodgers and V Son, "Legislating for Shared-Time Parenting After Parental Separation: Insights from Australia?" (2014) 77 *Law and Contemporary Problems* 109 at 132-133. This reflects a decline in levels of conflict and fear among newly separated parents as a whole (pp 133-134).

time—the consequence is that what to an adult seems like a temporary separation can be experienced in a very different way by an infant. Mary Main, Erik Hesse, and Siegfried Hesse have explained attachment as follows (M Main, E Hesse and S Hesse, “Attachment Theory and Research: Overview with Suggested Applications to Child Custody” (2011) 49 *Family Court Review* 426 at 437):

An attachment is one of a sub-set of bonds which tie one individual to another specific individual, binding them together in space and enduring over time. For reasons involving our evolutionary heritage, unless raised under highly anomalous conditions, first attachments to one or a few selected individuals are typically formed by three years of age, and usually within the first year...

For young children, an attachment may be described as a bond which serves to focus attention on the physical whereabouts or accessibility of one or a few selected, *non-interchangeable* older individual(s), whose proximity can then be sought in times of danger or fright. Separations from these selected “attachment figures” in unfamiliar or otherwise threatening environments is therefore expected to arouse distress, anxiety, or fear. Accordingly, a persistent tendency to monitor the whereabouts of a particular individual, and a propensity to take flight to them in times of perceived danger – whether or not behaviorally expressed – is an index that an attachment to that person has been formed.

There is a consensus among researchers that shared care arrangements involving extensive periods of time away from a primary caregiver are not appropriate for children under four years of age. There is more of a debate about the circumstances in which young children should stay overnight with the non-resident parent. Much depends on the relationship already established between the young child and the non-resident parent, and how well the parents can cooperate in providing a sense of security about transitions.

In recent years, there has been considerable controversy about what research tells us concerning the issue of young children staying overnight with non-resident parents. To endeavour to bring together the divergent perspectives, three prominent researchers in the field combined to offer guidance on the issue: M Pruett, J McIntosh, and J Kelly, “Parental Separation and Overnight Care of Young Children, Part I: Consensus Through Theoretical and Empirical Integration” (2014) 52 *Family Court Review* 240; J McIntosh, M Pruett and J Kelly, “Parental Separation and Overnight Care of Young Children, Part II: Putting Theory into Practice” (2014) 52 *Family Court Review* 256.

In the first article (at 250), the authors offered seven points of consensus:

1. Early childhood (0 – 3 years inclusive) is a period critical to subsequent psychosocial and emotional development and is deserving of special attention and planning in family law matters.
2. Across all family structures, healthy development in the young child rests on the capacity of caregivers to protect the child from physical harm and undue stress by being a consistent, responsive presence.
3. Similarly, healthy development rests on the capacity of caregivers to stimulate and support the child's independent exploration and learning and to handle the excitement and aggression that accompanies the process of discovery.

most advantageously, more than one available caregiver. An optimal goal is a “secure base” constituted by both parents and the child as a family system, healthy co-parenting environment supports the child's attachment relationships each parent and vice versa.

6. The small group of relevant studies to date substantiates caution about high frequency overnight time schedules in the 0 – 3 year period, particularly when the child's with a parent is unformed, or parents cannot agree on how to share care of the child. Equally true, clinical and theoretical cautions against any overnight care during the first three years have not been supported.
7. Critical variables in considering readiness for and the likely impact of overnight schedules include parents' psychological and social resources, the current parenting dynamics — particularly conflict, and the nature and quality of the parent-child relationship prior to separation.

The following extract is taken from the second of these articles.

## Parental Separation and Overnight Care of Young Children II: Putting Theory into Practice

[22.165] J McIntosh, M Pruett and J Kelly, “Parental Separation and Overnight Care of Young Children, Part II: Putting Theory into Practice” (2014) 52 *Family Court Review* 256 at 256-259

Throughout these two companion papers, we resist the urge to prescribe fixed formulae of numbers of overnights or age of commencement, and encourage policy makers and practitioners to do likewise. Instead, we provide guidance about the key assumptions, principles and specific factors that, when weighed together in the individual case, will foster developmentally sound decisions.

### The Underpinning Assumptions

A set of core assumptions provides a critical context for the decision-making chart that follows. Assumptions prioritize both attachment organization and joint parental involvement when conditions of safety and the minimization of stress are met. Under such conditions, a parenting plan would allow the child to benefit from the ways that parent-child relationships in childhood differ normatively, and enable access to the full complement of emotional, cognitive, social and economic resources each parent can offer. The clinical reasoning within the chart (Table 1) rests on three levels of assumptions:

**Table 1. Considerations for determining postseparation overnight care of children 0 – 3 years**

*Bear in mind when using this chart, that*

- 1) The left column reflects conditions within the caregiving environment to be considered in determining presence or absence, and frequency, of overnights.
- 2) Parents and other decision makers will need to weigh not only the number of overnights, but the spacing and frequency of transitions between homes, and the emotional ease of the exchanges for the child.
- 3) Even when all parenting conditions are met, higher frequency overnights (see right hand column) are generally indicated for infants 0 – 18 months. For reasons of temperament or maturation, this will also be indicated for older infants/toddlers who demonstrate difficulties at other times that their own attachment needs are not being met.