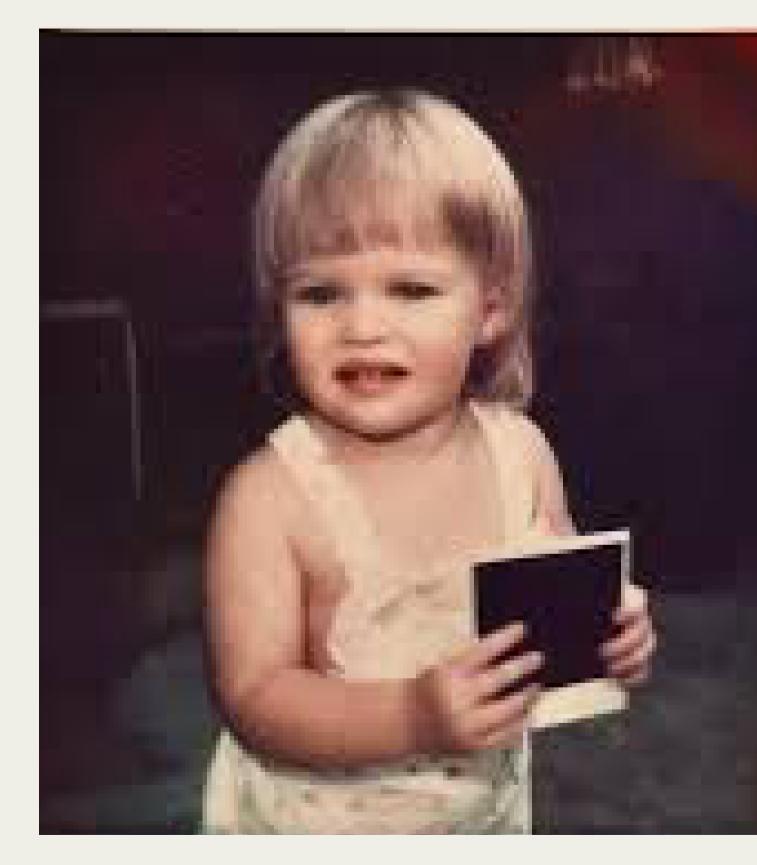
Parent-Child Custody Arrangements - Challenges for 2025

Brian Adams, EdD James P. Cole, PhD

PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS POST-SEPARATION

- A Review of the Impact of Divorce on Children
- Data Regarding Father's Presence vs. Absence Π
- **Exploring the Child's Psychological & Social Reactions to Divorce**
- **Therapeutic Stratagies to Address Parent-Child Contact Problems** IV







The Family Research Council

The Pew Research Center

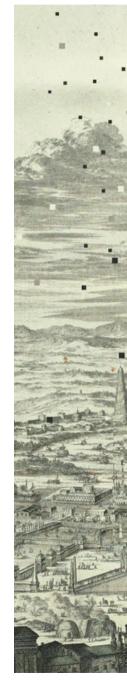
The Thomas B Fordham Institute

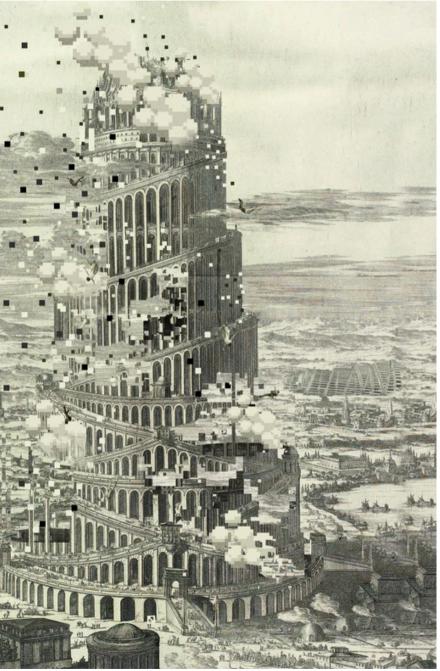
The Manhattan Institute

The National Institutes of Health

Social Science Research Network

DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY STRUCTURE





DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY STRUCTURE

INCREASES IN

Abuse, Mistreatment & Neglect **Parents' Poor Communication Skills** Limited Conclict Resolution Skills **Unresolved Emotional Issues** The Marriage Ends in Divorce: First Marriages: 45% **Second Marriages: 64% Third Marriages: 80%**



IT APPEARS THAT THE SAD REALITY IS THAT MOST OF US JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAINTAIN A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP

GRASPING THE REALITY OF THE CHILD:

WHEN PARENTS SEPARATE......

WHAT IS THE CHILD LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE?



Resulting Feelings.....

Scared **Vulnerable Overwhelmed** ╋ Confused Responsible +Guilty **Embarrased** ╋ **Ashamed**

ANXIOUS

&

DEPRESSED

Which Leads To.....

Parent-Child Contact Problems -1

Estrangement - In families where abuse, neglect or other harsh treatment has occurred the child is likely to pull away from that parent for justifiable reasons;

Enmeshment - In families where a child has developed a closer realtionship with one of the parents, she may entangle herself with that parent to the point that her thoughts, feelings and perceptions become indistinguishable from the parent's;

Parent-Child Contact Problems -2

Resist/Refuse Dynamic - This is the **unjustified rejection** of a parent fueled by: family dynamics; personality characteristics; coparenting problems; previous conflicts and separations.

Alienation - This is Unreasonable and Persistent Negative Feelings and Behaviors toward a parent which are inconsistent

with her previous experience with that parent. (When supported by a parent referred to as "Parental Alienation").



NORMAL ADOLESCENT / CHILDHOOD TRAITS

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS - They Just can't Make Sense of it All!

THE AMYGDALA KICKS IN - Shifting to "Survival Mode"

IDEALIZATION or DISREGARD FOR RELATIONSHIPS

BEWILDERED - From Black and White Thinking

The Combination of These Factors Creates



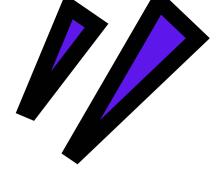
Persistent Difficulties of Children of Divorce:

Twice as Likly to Attempt Suicide Three times More Likely to Need Psychotherapy Twice as Likely to Dropout of School 50 % more Likely to Develop Serious Health Problems 33% More Likely to Have a Divorce of Their Own 29% Live Below the Poverty Line: 2 Times the National Average 70% of Long-Term Convicts are from Broken Homes

If This were a physical condition it would be called an Epidemic!



The Parental Alienation Dilemma



Organizations that Reject/Object using the term "Parental Alienation"

World Health Organization which publishes the ICD11 in 2022: Determined "<u>Not a Health-Care Term</u>"
National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges- "<u>Discredited Diagnosis of Parental Alienation</u>"
A Report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women & Girls 2023: "<u>Pseudo-Science</u>"

Organizations that Endorse/Acknowledge using "Parental Alienation"

Parental Alienation Study Group: International Organization of <u>Mental Health & Legal Professionals</u>
Parental Alienation Advocates: Fosters <u>Education & Support for those Impacted by Alienation</u>
International Support Network of Alienated Families: <u>12-Step Program/Podcast</u> for Affected Families

(and many more)

AFCC & NCJFCJ JOINT STATEMENT ON PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS

- There should be **NO** Immediate Labels used to Identify the Causes of Parent-Child Contact problems!

..... but, why not?

Causal Factors of Parent-Child Contact Problems

- A Child's Responses to a Parent's Abusive Behavior
 - A Lack of Functional Co-Parenting
 - Inter-Parental Conflict
 - **Sibling Rivalry**
 - **Inappropriate Alignment of Therapists**
 - Alignment with a Parent & Parental Alienation

AND WHAT'S DAD'S ROLE IN ALL THIS?

The Impact of Father in the Child's Life #1

86% of mass school shooters in the 2000's were separated from bio-father

75% of teens in substance abuse centers are from fatherless homes

71% of children who abuse substances come from fatherless homes

63% of youth suicides grew-up without a father

The Impact of Father in the Child's Life # 2

When Dad Remains in Child's Life Long-Term Parental Conflict is 55% Less !

Female Teens are 3.5 Xs Less Likely to Become PG When Dads are Involved.

Dad's Active Involvement Helps Overcome the Negative Effects of Divorce.

Oaretaking Competence IS NOT Gender Specific.



<u>SO, Considering all this</u>....

What Can We Do Better?



ADDRESSING PARENT-CHILD CONTACT PROBLEMS MORE EFFECTIVELY

Reunification Therapy: A Mechanism for Managing the Chaos: Peter Kempf and Britane Outlaw

> Ten Tips for Working with Parent-Child Contact Problems as a Solo Practitioner: Terry Singh, Ph.D.

When A Child Rejects a Parent: Working w/ the Intractable Resist/Refuse Dynamic:-Majorie Gans Walters & Stephen Friedlander

Family-Based Therapy for Parent-Child Reunification: Linda Smith

AFCC AND NCJFCJ Joint Statement on Parent-Child Contact Problems

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT INTRACTABLE FAMILY DYNAMICS

Frequently Fueled and Maintained by Significant Mental Health Problems

Clinical Interventions Requires the Participation of the Whole Family

Families More Responsive /Accountable To Specific Interventions & Goals

MORE LIKELY TO RESPOND TO A TEAM OF LEGAL & MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHEN THE COURT PARTICIPATES IN OVERSEEING & MONITORING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

RECOMMENDED APPROACH STRATEGIES -1

Establish a Team with Expanded Communication:

The Court & the Attorneys Select a Family Therapist, Parent-Child Coordinator or a Child Custody Evaluator as part of a Intervention Team to Implement Expanded Avenues of Group Decision-Making and Communication. This will Enable Up-to-Date Information Sharing, based on Ongoing Feedback Regarding the Therapeutic Progress of all Family Members.



RECOMPENDED <u>REQUIRED</u> APPROACH STRATEGIES-2

- <u>Safety</u>: First, Second, Later & Forever! Ongoing Screening for abuse and or neglect!
- **Discernment**? What Factors are Creating / Maintaining the Relationship Breakdown?
- <u>Caution</u>. Listen to the Child: Be Mindful of Vulnerability- Black & White Thinking and the Child Avoiding Parents' Conflict by Taking a Side. Be Careful Letting him/her Decide!

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT STRATEGIES - 1

Collabortion

- Using the Expanded Communication the Court's Orders for
- Assessment and Specific Therapies are Discussed by the
 - Entire Collaborative Team
 - with the Court making the Final Decisions.

ne Court's Orders for Discussed by the

<u>RECOMMENDED TREATMENT STRATEGIES - 2</u>

Who Attends Therapy

Both Parents Are to be in Therapy In Order to Promote the Cognitive and the Behavioral Modifications Required to Promote Changes in Themselves as well as in The Family.

All Children

Displaying even Minimal Related Difficulties will also participate in an Appropriate Type of Therapy Chosen by the Team.

All Therapy Orders

will include Specific Interventions and Goals, as well as Provisions for Ongoing Feedback & Review by the Court & the Team.



RECOMMENDED TREATMENT STRATEGIES - 3

Who Provides the Treatment

Therapists Selected by the Team should have training and experience in working with Resist/Refuse cases. The therapy will include: education, coaching, and skill building.

The Court Maintains a list of Therapists Specialized in Dealing with Particular Aspects of RRD

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT STRATEGIES - 4

The Focus of Treatment

Specialized Individual Psychotherapy to Help and Support the Child

Specialized Individual Psychotherapy for the Intractable Favored Parent

Specialized Psychotherapy/Coaching for the Intractable Rejected Parent

Co-Parenting Therapy as Indicated

The Moral of this Presentation -is

PARENTAL COLLABORATION.....

Surely Doesn't Come Easily -

But, even a Jackxxx can learn that.....

