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Attachment Methodology in Custody Evaluation: Four Hurdles Standing Between Developmental Theory and Forensic Application

Author: Benjamin D. Garber ^a

Affiliation: ^a HealthyParent.com, Merrimack, New Hampshire

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Abstract

Post-separation and post-divorce child custody guidelines have evolved from one-size-fits-all, gender-biased and adult-centered norms toward today's resource-intensive, child-centered best-interests standard. For all of its broad appeal, the best-interest standard remains ill-defined. The present paper discusses attachment theory as an empirically rich, developmentally-informed and systemically-oriented model with great promise to some day inform child custody litigation but which remains, as yet, impractical and without adequate validation for this application. Four hurdles are identified which family law professionals must yet overcome before this wealth of data can begin to become part of best-psychological-interests custody evaluations.

Keywords: attachment; best interests; custody; family law; strange situation

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