

API Board of Directors

Barbara Nicholson, MEd
API Founder
President of the Board

Lysa Parker, MS
API Founder, Director
Emeritus
ParentsLifeLine.com

Carlotta Crawford, CNM

Lu Hannebian
Author,
LettheBabyDrive.com

Reedy Hickey, IBCLC
La Leche League

Janet Jendron
La Leche League

Gena Kirby, Business owner
Mommy Matters

Stephen Knight, JD

API Advisory Board

Elliot Barker, MD
Canadian Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty to
Children (CSPCC)

Stephen Bavolek, PhD
Family Nurturing Centers

Sir Richard Bowlby, Bt.

Barbara Clinton, MSW
Center for Health Services
Vanderbilt University

Isabelle Fox, PhD
Psychotherapist & Author

Jay Gordon, MD
Pediatrician and Author

Jan Hunt, MS
Child Psychologist &
Director,
The Natural Child Project

James McKenna, PhD
Anthropologist

Alice Miller
Author & Childhood
Researcher

Peggy O'Mara
Editor, Mothering Magazine

Bruce Perry, MD, PhD
Psychiatrist & Neuroscience
Researcher

Martha Sears, RN
Registered Nurse & Author

William Sears, MD
Pediatrician and Author

Michael Trout, MA
Director, The Infant-Parent
Institute

Karen Walant, PhD
Psychotherapist & Author

Samantha Gray, MA
Executive Director
Attachment Parenting
International

May 30, 2008

Mr. Jeffrey Zucker
President and CEO, NBC
NBC Viewer Relations
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112

Dear Mr. Zucker,

The Baby Borrowers, a reality show described as a “social experiment” that originally aired in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, is expected to air on NBC this season. Attachment Parenting International (API) strongly objects to this programming based on the treatment of infants and toddlers during the filming of the series. In the series, 6 to 11 month old infants and 1- 2 year old toddlers are separated from their parents for three days and placed in the care of unfamiliar teenagers with no care giving experience.

Our objections are based on international principles and national regulations concerning accepted and protected treatment of children, research evidence, and concerns regarding whether families are fully informed about the risks associated with allowing their infants and toddlers to participate in the reality show. These objections are outlined below.

In regard to international principles, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) outlines protections that are violated by an infant's or toddler's participation in this programming.

Principle 2: The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

Principle 6: The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support. Payment of State and other assistance towards the maintenance of children of large families is desirable.

Principle 9: The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form. The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

For the sake of entertainment, infants and toddlers are separated from their families and provided inadequate, insensitive caretaking by teenagers in an atmosphere that could be identified as stressful and even abusive to the child. The years from birth to 3 years of age constitute a sensitive period for early brain development. During this period, infants and toddlers require continuity in caretaking with responsive caregivers to develop positive attachment relationships, curiosity and initiative, a healthy sense of self, and the ability to regulate emotions. Research to support these claims is outlined in the attached letter of complaint written by professionals in New Zealand. We will refer you to their letter rather than repeat the research citations here.

In regard to national regulations, treatment of infants and toddlers in *The Baby Borrowers* is unethical based on the regulations of the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) which treat children as a special or protected population. As a research project, the Baby Borrowers “social experiment” would not be approved because the magnitude and probability of risk is very high with potential catastrophic physical and psychological consequences. In addition, university and private Institutional Review Boards would be opened up to legal action, regardless of the liability release that parents may sign.

We request that *The Baby Borrowers* series be canceled and look forward to your response regarding this matter. It is our intent to broadly disseminate our concern to professionals in the areas of child welfare and development.

The API Research Group members:

Wendy Middlemiss, PhD, CFLE
Co-Leader, Attachment Parenting
Research Group
Associate Professor
Penn State University
Department of Human
Development and Family Studies
wlm6@psu.edu

Katherine Green, PhD
Co-Leader, Attachment Parenting
Research Group
Troy State University, Montgomery
Colleges of Education and
Psychology,
Kategreen03@yahoo.com

Lysa Parker, MS
Attachment Parenting International
lparker@attachmentparenting.org

Barbara Nicholson, MEd
President, Board of Directors
Attachment Parenting International
bnicholson@attachmentparenting.org

Miranda Barone, PhD
California State University,
Long Beach
Department of Psychology
baronem@msn.com

Mary Elizabeth Curtner-Smith,
PhD, CFLE
Associate Professor
The University of Alabama
Department of Human Development
and Family Studies
mcurtner@ches.ua.edu

Ann D. Murray, PhD
Associate Professor
Kansas State University
School of Family Studies and
Human Services
admurray@ksu.edu

Jeanne Stolzer, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Family Studies
Otto Olsen, 205-D
University of Nebraska, Kearney
Kearney, NE 68849
stolzerjm@unk.edu

Samantha Gray, MA
Executive Director
Attachment Parenting International
samantha@attachmentparenting.org

Attachment: Letter of complaint by professionals in New Zealand citing research attesting to the detrimental effects of *The Baby Borrowers* on young children.