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(54) **BABY CARRIER COVER SYSTEM**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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Cover (10) for baby held in front-carried carrier (100; or car seat/carrier 200, FIG. 8, etc.) suspended at adult user's front including two, top, substantially triangular, front (70) sub-panels (21) forming, alternatively, sealing collar (21') when positioned about baby's neck (FIG. 4), or hood (21") about baby's head when pulled up and snap connected (22, FIG. 5). The cover includes shoulder straps (31), front straps (41), stowing sleeves (42), waist straps (51) providing four-point carrier attachment, interior zippered pouch (61), cinches (75), side "pocket" slits (76) & elastic bands (77) in expandable, accordion sides (74). A central band (31) of heavy duty material provides structural support. Cover's rear (71) has "cut-out" (72) allowing cover to be slipped under front-carried carrier and over baby in carrier, with two, vertically spaced, strap sets connecting cover directly to carrier's body attachment straps (e.g., 101, 103) and not directly to user.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/311,978**

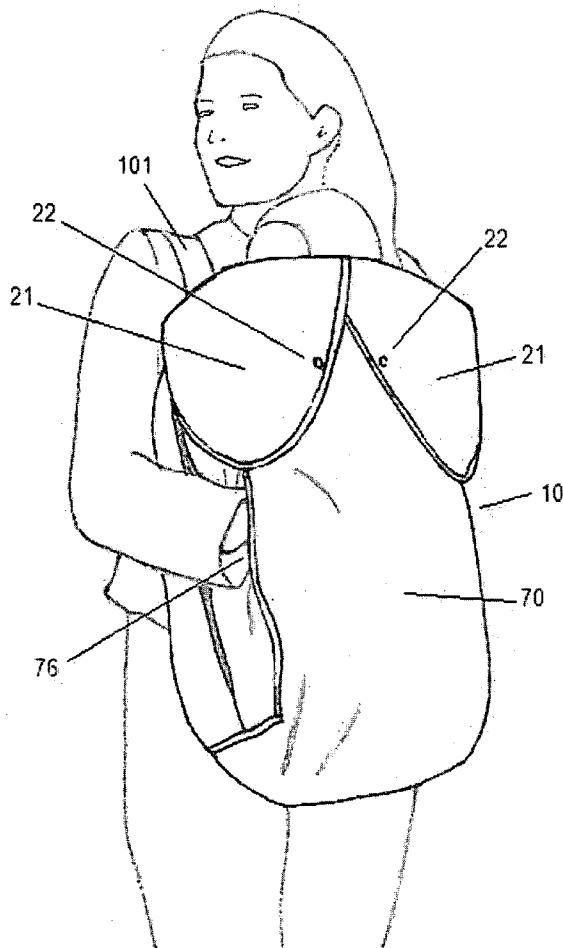
(22) Filed: **Dec. 19, 2005**

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Publication Classification

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A41D 13/12 (2006.01)



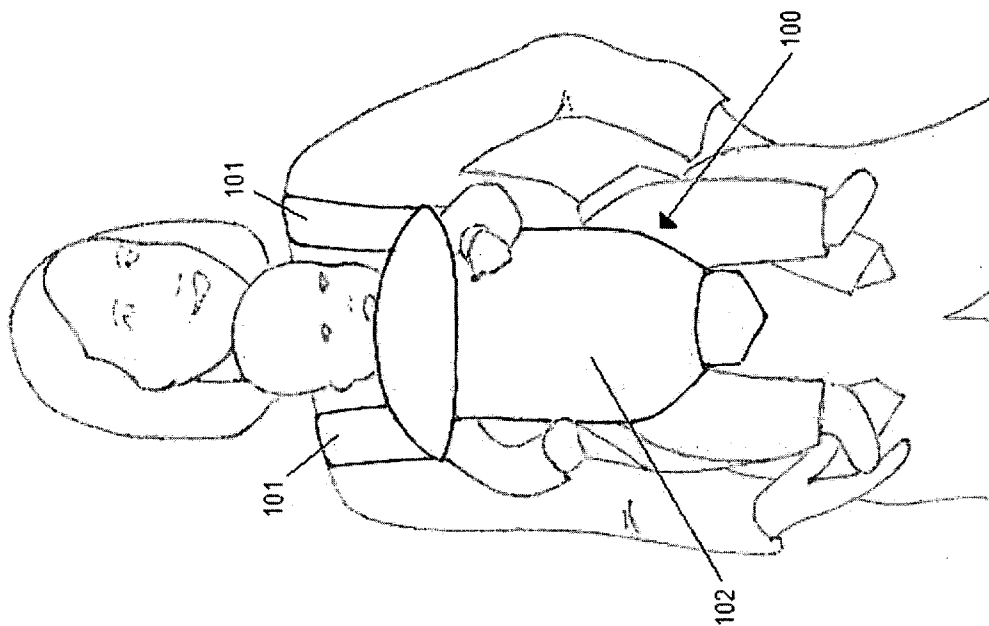


Figure 1A
(Prior Art)

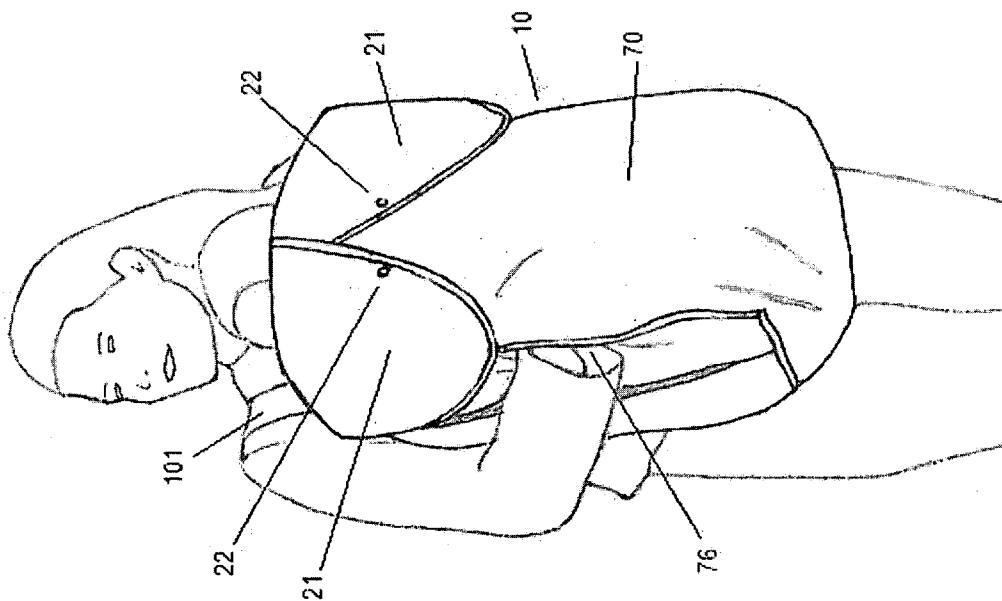


Figure 1

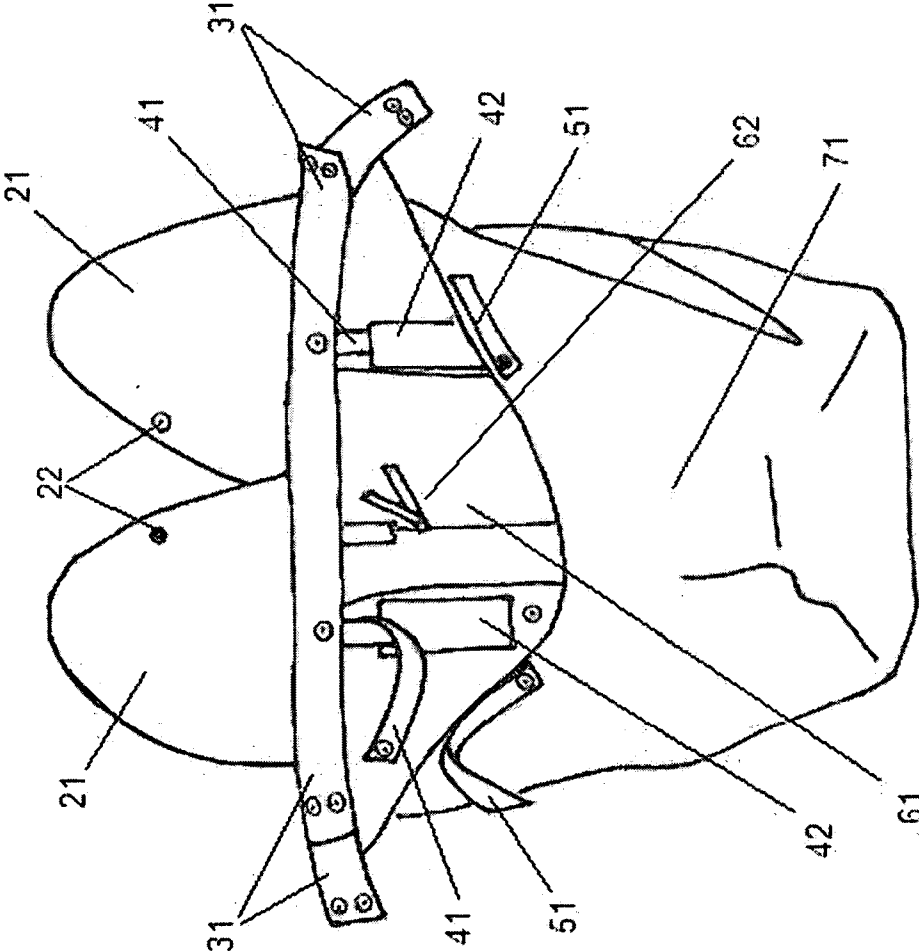


Figure 2

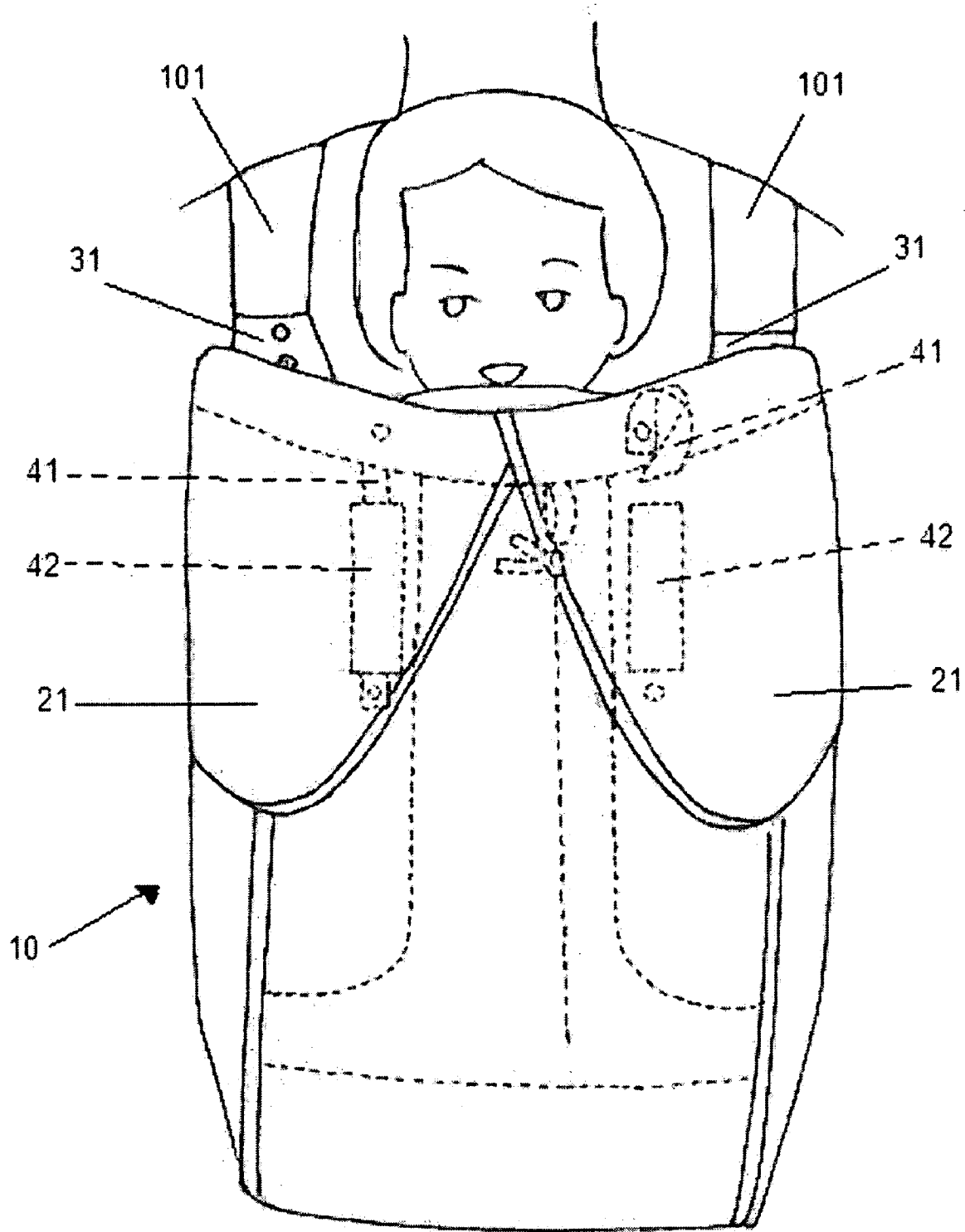


Figure 3

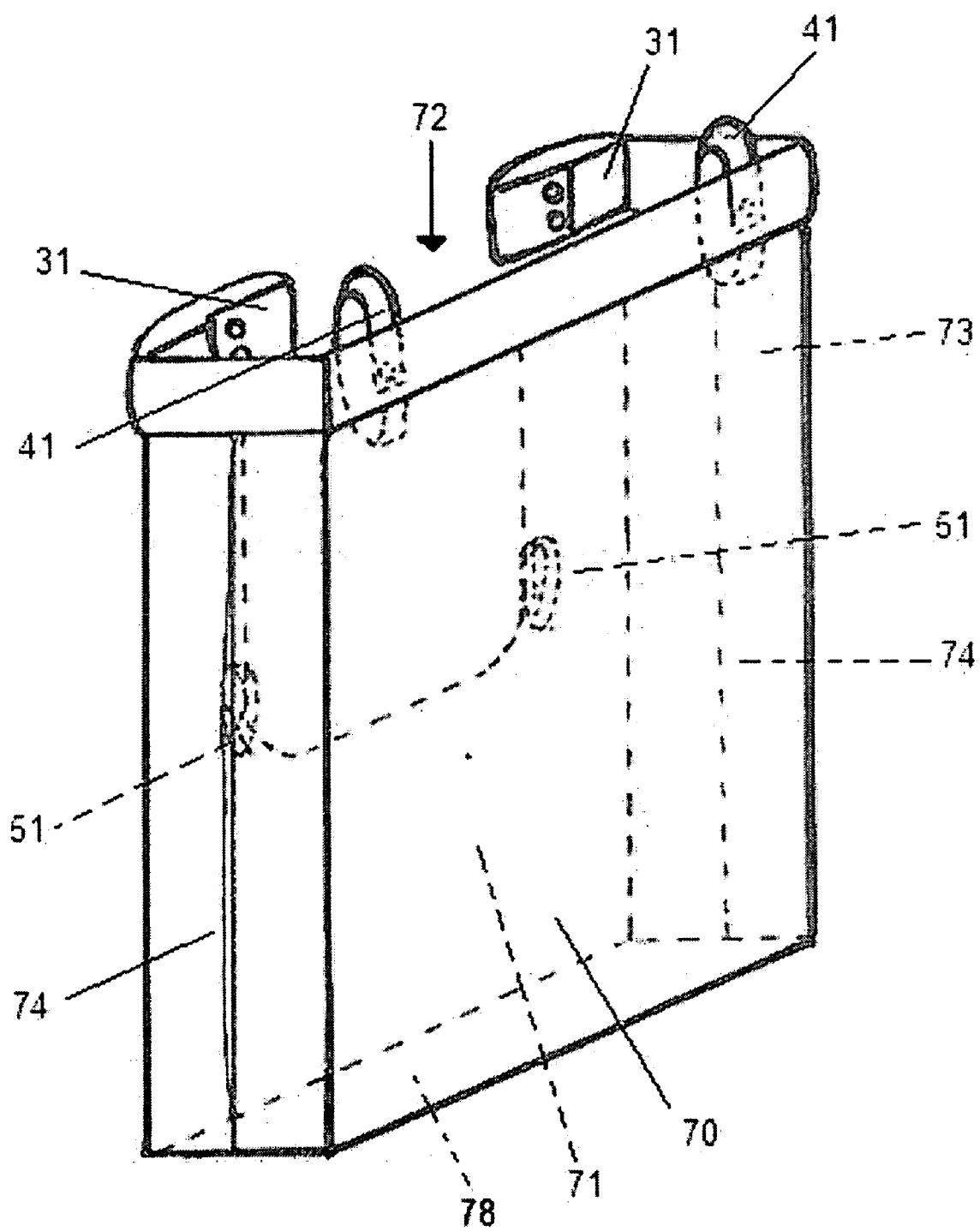


Figure 3A

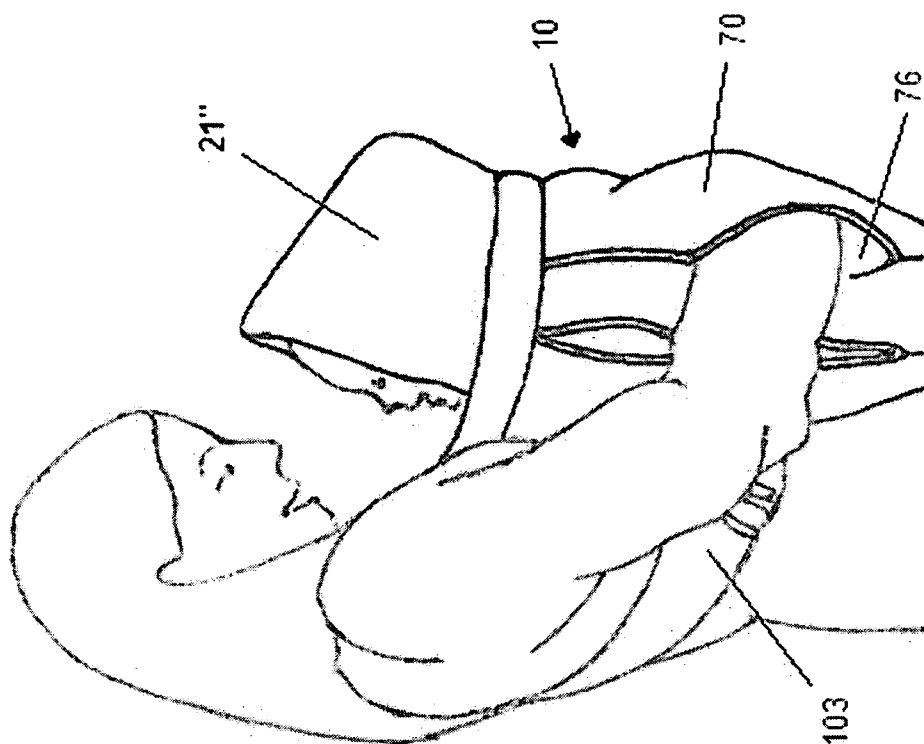


Figure 5

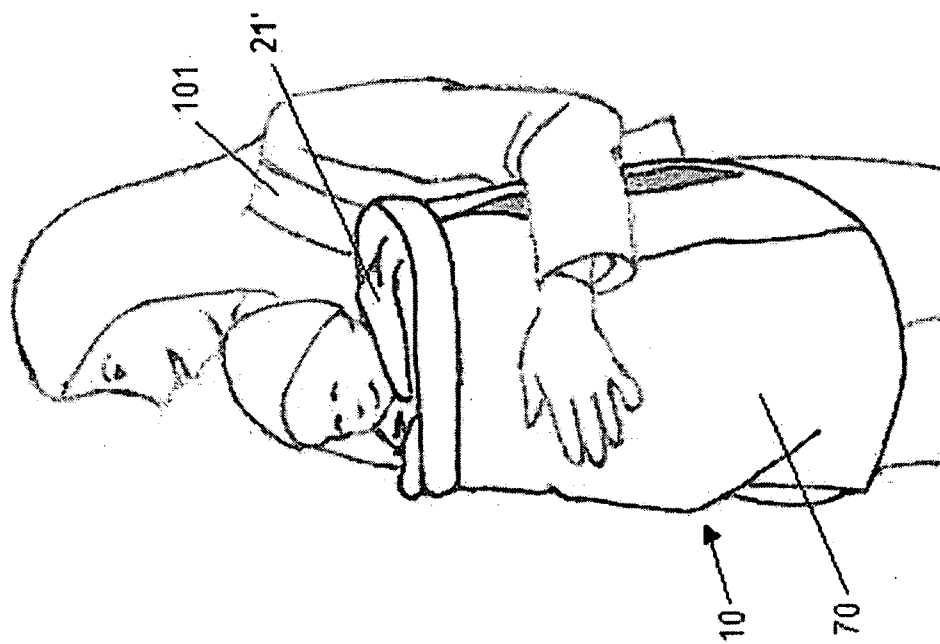


Figure 4

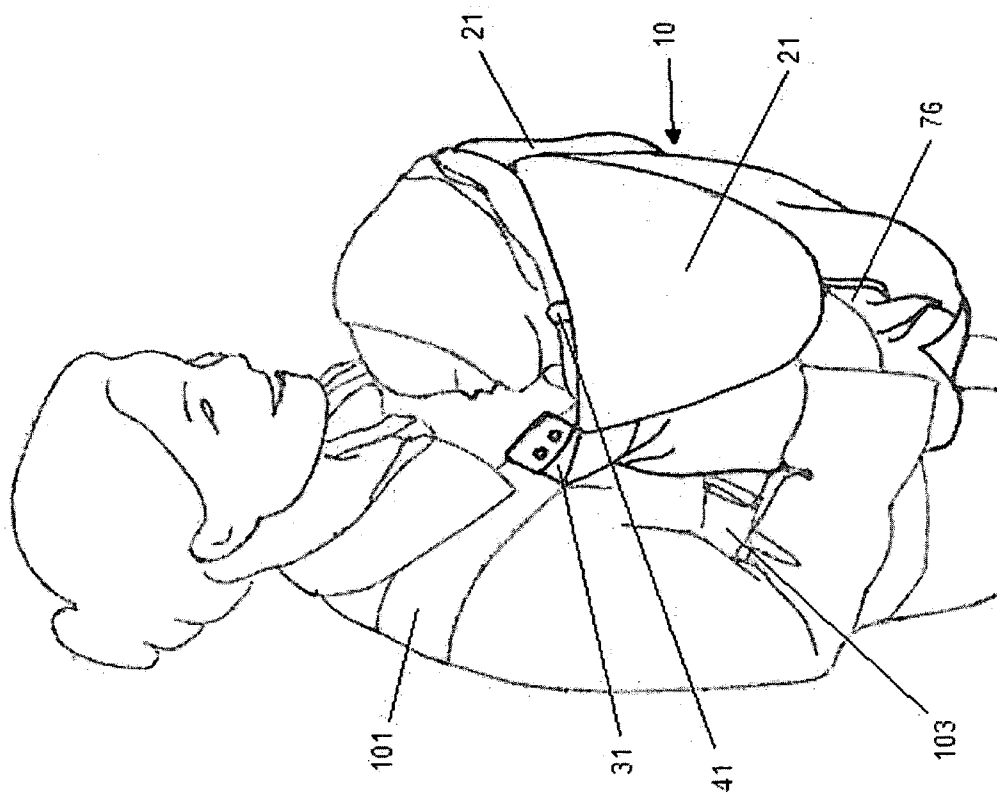


Figure 6

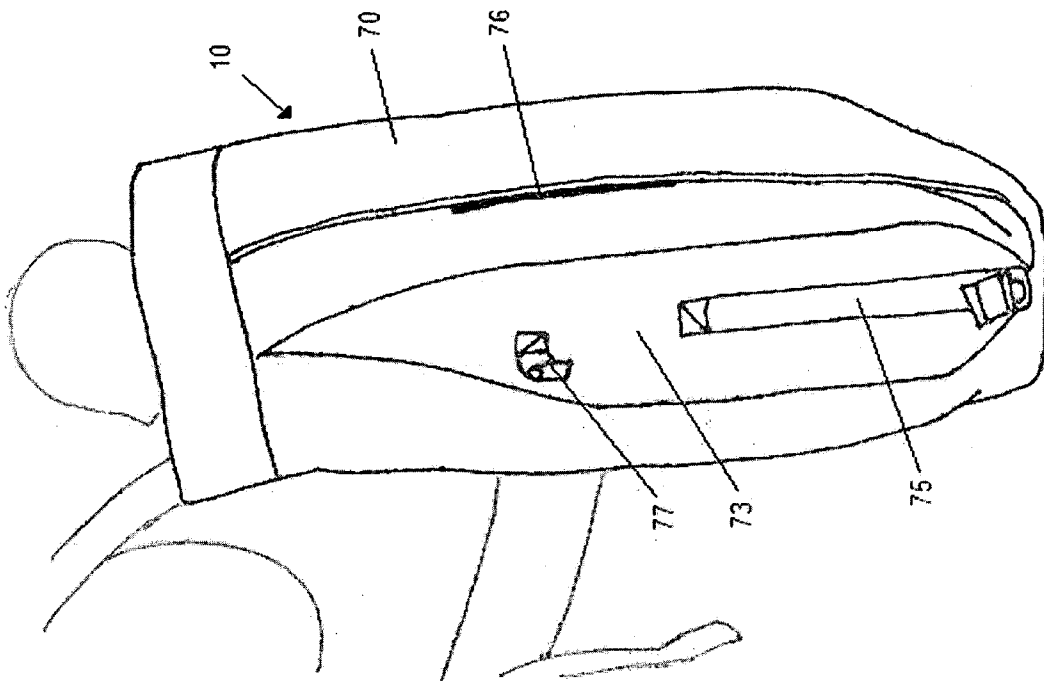


Figure 7B

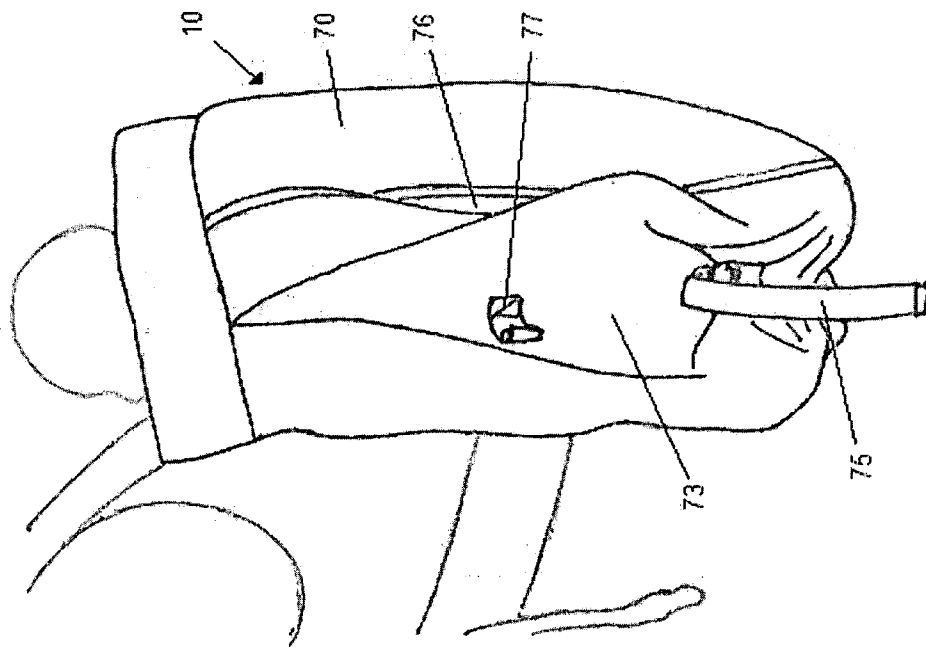


Figure 7A

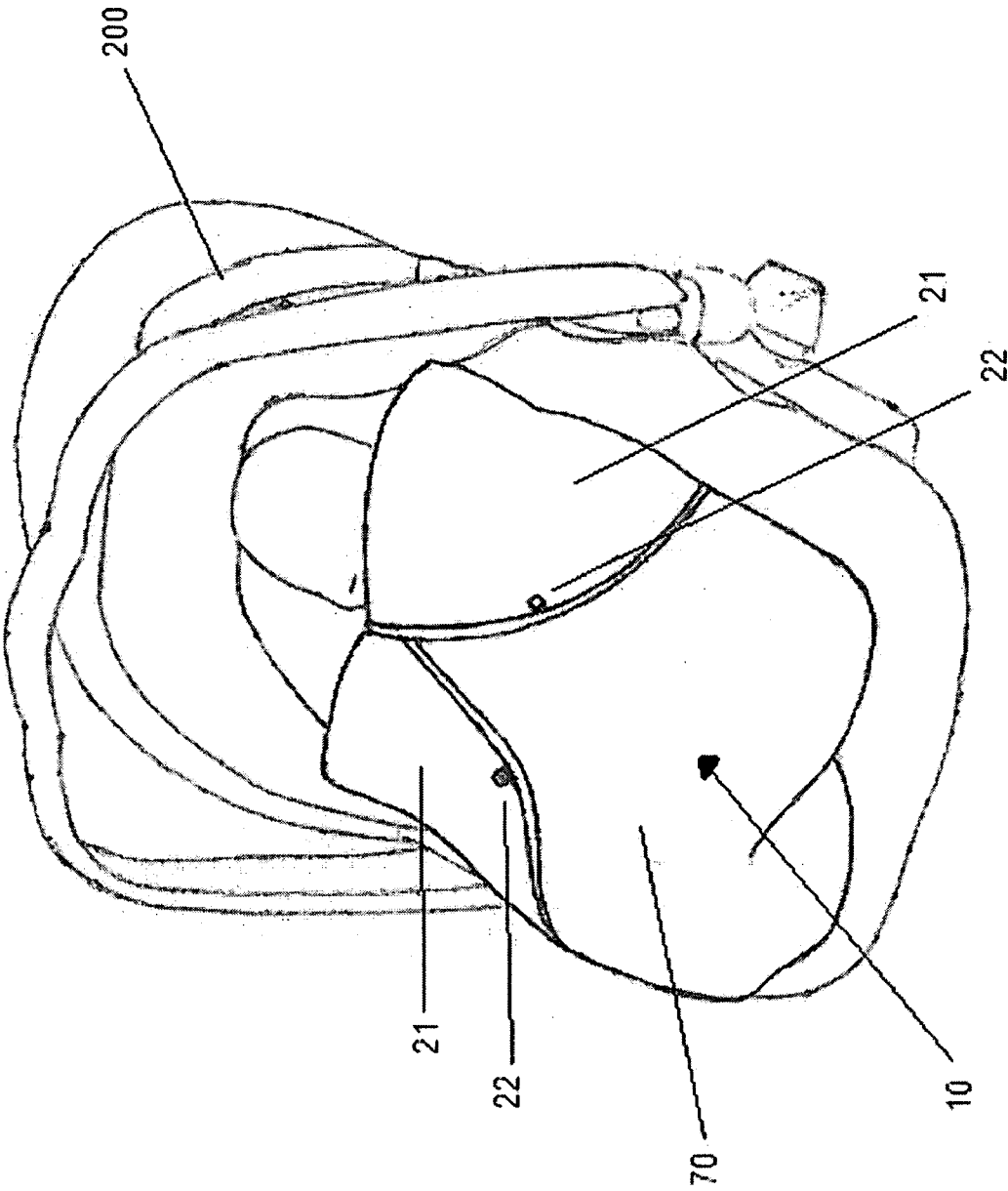


Figure 8

BABY CARRIER COVER SYSTEMREFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT
APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the priority rights of Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/637,715 filed Dec. 19 (20), 2004 entitled "Baby Carrier Cover System" listing the co-inventors hereof.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to baby carriers, for example, those made of cloth or other fabric material worn on the front of an adult and secured by, for example, shoulder straps, waist straps, etc., as well as those that are rigid (e.g., made of plastic) and carried by hand or used as car seats or strollers, etc., and more particularly to a cover therefor for supplemental covering and protection of the baby to protect the baby from the ambient or undesirable environmental conditions. Various features of the cover of the invention and its cooperative relationships with the carrier, the baby and the adult user are described below.

BACKGROUND ART

[0003] A list of prior patents based on a search done by one of the co-inventors which may be of some general interest, although it is noted that some of them are not from the field to which the present invention pertains, is provided below:

Patent No.	Inventor(s)	Issue Date
336,124	Levy	February, 1886
1,940,224	Munro	December, 1933
2,036,175	Hollander	Mar. 31, 1936
2,227,751	Idelman	Jan. 7, 1941
2,324,665	Ayres	Jul. 20, 1943
2,378,434	Robinson	Jun. 19, 1945
2,659,086	McGrath	Nov. 17, 1953
3,034,132	Landsberger et al	May 15, 1962
3,370,303	Tempelhof	February, 1968
4,009,808	Sharp	Mar. 1, 1977
4,241,458	Lesesne	Dec. 30, 1980
4,254,900	Wheeler	Mar. 10, 1981
4,333,591	Case	June, 1982
4,402,440	Purtzer et al	September, 1983
4,434,920	Moore	March, 1984
4,492,326	Storm	January, 1985
4,579,264	Napolitano	April, 1986
4,606,078	Tkacsik	Aug. 19, 1996
4,773,101	Kapp et al	Sep. 27, 1988
4,778,091	Barto	Oct. 18, 1988
4,886,315	Johnson	December, 1989
4,897,885	Lunt	Feb. 6, 1990
4,912,818	Meeker	April, 1990
4,946,221	Livingston	Aug. 7, 1990
4,987,612	Middleton	January, 1991
4,989,268	Stolhand	Feb. 5, 1991
4,993,090	Ranalli	Feb. 19, 1991
4,995,116	Beauchamp et al	Feb. 26, 1991
5,031,962	Lee	July, 1991
5,034,999	Lubbers	July, 1991
5,046,204	Mohler	Sep. 10, 1991
5,058,226	Crosby	Oct. 22, 1991
5,205,451	Manzer	April, 1993
5,222,641	Medeiros, Jr.	June, 1993
5,243,724	Barnes	Sep. 14, 1993
5,246,152	Dotseth	September, 1993
5,259,068	Carroll	November, 1993

-continued

Patent No.	Inventor(s)	Issue Date
5,309,586	Sies et al	May 10, 1994
5,437,061	Kenner	Aug. 1, 1995
5,490,620	Bergqvist	February, 1996
5,509,590	Medeiros, Jr. et al	April, 1996
5,535,449	Dickey	Jul. 16, 1996
5,609,279	O'Shea	Mar. 11, 1997
5,611,095	Schneider	Mar. 18, 1997
5,626,271	Messey et al	May, 1997
5,690,258	Kataoka	November, 1997
5,692,257	Albertieri	Dec. 2, 1997
5,692,655	Fair et al	December, 1997
5,722,094	Ruefer	Mar. 3, 1998
5,730,490	Mortenson	Mar. 24, 1998
5,732,861	Jakobson	March, 1998
5,781,946	McEntire et al	Jul. 21, 1998
5,791,535	Roan et al	August, 1998
5,813,580	Fair	September, 1998
5,848,741	Fair	December, 1998
5,868,292	Stephens et al	February, 1999
5,897,164	Kagan et al	Apr. 27, 1999
5,946,725	Shatzkin et al	Sep. 7, 1999
5,950,261	Hay et al	Sep. 14, 1999
5,956,766	Benway	Sep. 28, 1999
5,956,767	Imm	Sep. 28, 1999
6,009,576	Gramme et al	Jan. 4, 2000
6,012,189	Dudley	Jan. 11, 2000
6,055,686	Knight	May 2, 2000
6,056,355	Klassen	May 2, 2000
6,145,932	Hamel-Nyhus et al	Nov. 14, 2000
6,158,641	Eyman et al	December, 2000
6,272,683	Symms et al	Aug. 14, 2001
6,341,397	Kliegl et al	Jan. 29, 2002
6,389,597	Henegan	May 21, 2002
6,394,543	Dunne et al	May 28, 2002
6,401,248	Christensen	Jun. 11, 2002
6,408,439	Garforth-Crippen	Jun. 25, 2002
6,409,060	Donine	June, 2002
6,434,750	Hunter	June, 2002
6,547,325	Drost et al	Apr. 15, 2003
6,598,771	Norman	Jul. 29, 2003
6,736,299	Bergqvist	May 18, 2004
6,817,033	Bailey	Nov. 16, 2004
D 116,907	Friedman	September, 1939
D 120,718	Friedman	May, 1940
D 132,469	Murphy	May 19, 1942
D 255,952	Goldstone	Jul. 22, 1980
D 260,695	Brookfield	September, 1981
D 267,284	Andrews	Dec. 21, 1982
D 269,658	Bor	Jul. 12, 1983
D 277,811	Moore	March, 1985
D 282,596	Bangert	February, 1986
D 301,796	Sildva	Jun. 27, 1989
D 313,723	Rankin et al	Jan. 15, 1991
D 325,113	O'Loughlin	Apr. 7, 1992
D 334,253	Balzarini	March, 1993
D 355,068	Prendergast	February, 1995
D 376,505	O'Brien	Dec. 17, 1996
D 380,589	Westman	Jul. 8, 1997
D 384,188	Imm	Sep. 30, 1997
D 395,188	Rush	June, 1998
D 399,676	Gerlach	Oct. 20, 1998
D 448,914	Caudill	Oct. 9, 2001
D 485,676	Simpson	Jan. 27, 2004

[0004] Only D 485,676 and U.S. Pat. No. 6,434,750 are directed to covers for use with front carried and adult user supported carriers in a fashion having some similarity with the exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0005] With respect to the cover of D 485,676, which is a two-dimensional cover (vs. three dimensions as in the invention providing the invention's freedom of movement), it uses

only two thin straps and does not allow for front or vertically spaced, waist strap attachments. Additionally, there are no side pockets for the adult user and no pouch for storing essentials. The Simpson cover also has no hood/collar arrangement, no way to adjust the cover's effective length and has limited wiggle room for the child, etc.

[0006] With respect to the cover of U.S. Pat. No. 6,434,750, it attaches directly to the adult user, and has only a single strap which is extended around the adult user's neck, which uncomfortably goes around the adult user's neck. It has a bulky design with no way to adjust length (i.e., effective height), is not designed to be used on devices other than soft front infant carriers, and has no form of hood, etc.

[0007] Examples of some of the products with which the exemplary embodiment of the present invention might be used include:

[0008] Soft infant carriers such as, for example, the "Baby Björn®" baby carrier

(see www.babybjorn.com/TemplatesWeb/ProductInfo.asp?itemid=24 and FIG. 1A hereof),

[0009] "Snugli®" soft carriers (www.snugli.com/pr/pr.phtml), and

[0010] "maclaren" baby carrier

(www.maclarenbaby.com/US/pages/babycarrier.html), etc.;

[0011] Infant car seats such as, for example, the "Graco® SnugRide®"

(www.gracobaby.com/catalog/product.aspx?modelNumber=8647CAP&CategoryID=1), which web site was working in 2004 but currently (Dec. 19, 2005) is not, and

[0012] "Evenflo® Discovery" (www.evenflo.com/pr/in/prin_disc.phtml), etc.;

[0013] Strollers; and

[0014] Infant bouncy seats, such as, for example, the "Fisher-Price® Soothing Massage Bouncer"

(www.fisher-price.com/us/babygear/product.asp?id=27467&c=bgb), etc.; etc.

[0015] Other products on the market that perform a similar function to that of the exemplary embodiment, but offer less sophisticated or otherwise less advantageous design and without the patentable features of the present invention, include:

[0016] "Mugwumps—The Cozy Topper" (www.mugwumps.biz/fleece.htm), which apparently merely is a cover comprised of two panels (front/rear) sewn together along their side and bottom edges, leaving no side expandable, extra interior room for the baby to easily move around in, kick, and the like, does refer to tucking the cover in around the baby, which is not required in the present invention, and does attach at its top to the carrier's shoulder straps with top straps on the cover but only there and not at the waist or elsewhere, and has a top, rectangular, flip-up flap for loosely covering (not like a hood) the baby's head but which is not capable of effectively, alternatively forming a sealing collar about the baby's neck and over the baby's

shoulders as in one aspect of the present invention, etc., and is noted as being "patent pending" and apparently is possibly related to the above cited D485,676 patent (also note comments above with respect to this patent), and a similar product for protection from the sun termed the "Sun Topper" (www.mugwumps.biz/solar.htm#Topper),

[0017] "Walk with Me™" (www.cc3design.com/) baby carrier cover, patent pending according to its website,

[0018] "Kiddopotamus®" (www.kiddopotamus.com/prod_fw_main.html, or, more recently, http://www.kiddopotamus.com/p_flee.php) fleece warmer which includes side openings for the adult user to insert his or hands and a pop-out hood stored in a hidden pocket,

[0019] "Kukuku®" outnabout hands-free carrier covers (www.helpmelicense.com/kukuku.html), U.S. Pat. 6,434,750, both showing side pockets (note comments above with respect to this patent),

[0020] "Kangaroo Kuddler®" (www.mobilemoms.com/kankud.html) cover for front carriers, car seats, infant seats, strollers, etc., has a hand warmer pocket in the front for keeping the adult user's hands warm and snug as well with an easy "Velcro®" attachment and a zippered pocket that contains a hood for the baby's head, and

[0021] "Baby Capes" (www.babycapes.com/pages/1/index.html) attachable wraps appear to be completely & snugly wrapped around the adult user's body, as well as the baby in a front-type carrier, "fasten in four easy steps," etc., etc.

[0022] [Copies of all of the above web sites as they existed as of the filing of the previously filed, provisional patent application are included in the USPTO file record of this utility patent application.]

[0023] As will become clear from the below disclosures, the preferred embodiment of the carrier cover of the present invention is designed to provide a much better, more adaptable in use, baby carrier cover system for the baby and the adult user than that achieved in the prior art and is believed to be a significant, patentable addition to the "useful arts."

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF INVENTION

[0024] As previously noted, the present invention relates to a cover for use with baby or young child carriers and the like (e.g., car seats, hand-carried carriers, baby carriers attached on the front of the body of the adult users, strollers, bouncers, etc.).

[0025] Part of the problems resolved by the exemplary embodiment of the present carrier cover invention include:

[0026] In cold weather eliminating the need to, for example, dress a child in a snowsuit prior to placing the child in an infant carrier. It dramatically simplifies traveling or doing errands with a small child. In addition to being far more comfortable for the child by allowing them greater freedom of movement, it allows, for example, a parent to remove the covering without having to remove the child from the carrier. Use of the exemplary embodiment also is believed to be safer

since it decreases the amount of clothing between the child and the safety harness on the transportation device and

[0027] In sunny weather providing a simple, breathable means to protect a child from the sun without having to worry about the coverage slipping off as it might when using, for example, a standard blanket.

[0028] Functionality—the exemplary embodiment of the invention is designed to protect a child from the elements (sun, wind, cold weather, etc.) when the child is seated in an infant carrying device, stroller or bouncy seat.

[0029] In contrast with the prior art and with respect to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, it is noted that the currently preferred, exemplary carrier cover of the invention preferably is affixed to the carrier itself and not to the adult user, and the adult users do not have to wear the cover's straps around themselves. In the preferred embodiment of the invention front straps are used to prevent sagging and to distribute the combined weight of the carrier cover and the contents of the pouch beyond the shoulder straps, while preferably waist straps allow the adult user or parent to remove the carrier cover from the child, while still keeping it attached to the carrier. This means that the adult users do not have to worry about carrying the cover around while doing, for example, errands. They, for example, simply tuck the cover into itself and allow it merely to hang.

[0030] It is noted that the shoulder straps preferably are extensions of a horizontal band of heavy duty fabric. This horizontal band provides structure and ensures that the cover may be fastened such that the cover does not sag. In contrast the competing products typically use only a "Velcro"™ type tab which does not provide such structure and results in sagging.

[0031] The exemplary embodiment of the carrier cover of the present invention includes front, rear and side panels which are assembled to encase a child's body. When the exemplary embodiment of the carrier cover of the invention is used on a front carrier (such as, for example, the "Baby Björn®" baby carrier), side slit pockets preferably are included to provide parents or other adult users with a way to keep their own hands warm, easy access to the baby, and access to preferably an interior, storage pouch, which preferably has a zippered or other appropriate closure. The front portion of the cover preferably is topped by two, generally triangular panels, which form a divided collar which is simply wrapped around the sides of the child's neck and over the child's shoulders to help seal out the elements and which, alternatively, may be snapped or otherwise affixed together (for example, alternatively using "Velcro"® type material, etc.) to form a hood fully surrounding the child's head, including the child's head's sides.

[0032] The right and left sides of the exemplary embodiment of the carrier cover preferably each include inverted box pleats or the like with a rectangular bottom. This design provides a nice tailored look while at the same time allows enough fabric and "give" so that the child can freely move his/her arms and legs. The currently preferred cover thus preferably has a squared-off, laterally expandable, paper grocery bag-like interior with the inverted box pleat or accordion-fold sides (or the like) providing a side expandable interior resulting in additional room for the child to comfortably move about, flail about, kick and the like.

[0033] Within the inverted box pleat side panels preferably is, among other items, a cinching system which allows one to adjust the carrier cover's effective length to best accommodate the baby's height.

[0034] The exemplary, currently preferred carrier cover of the invention can be attached using several, different strap sets, which preferably are located at the shoulder, front and waist areas. By providing multiple means by which to secure the carrier cover, this design ensures a snug, secure fit and also allows a parent to decrease coverage while allowing the carrier cover to remain affixed to the carrying device. For example, when in a store, a parent can undo the top shoulder straps and the front straps to remove the carrier cover from the child's shoulders and torso, while keeping the waist straps attached so that the child's legs remain covered.

[0035] The cover's shoulder straps and its waist straps preferably provide a "vertically" spaced and at least a three-point (preferably a four-point as illustrated) carrier attachment, using preferably at least two, vertically spaced strap sets (shoulder and waist) to connect the cover directly to the carrier's body attachment straps (shoulder-strap-to-shoulder-strap and waist-strap-to-waist-strap) and not directly to the user. This results in a very stable fastening of the cover to the carrier, vertically spaced a significant distance (at least about six or more inches) and spaced side-to-side by the width separation distance(s) of the carrier's shoulder and waist straps. However, although a four-point, vertically spaced arrangement is much preferred, one could use just a two-point attachment at the carrier's shoulder straps, if so desired, while enjoying other ones of the patentable, independent features described herein.

[0036] Additionally and preferably, an interior pouch, preferably closeable by zipping or hook-and-loop, etc., arrangement, provides the adult users with secure but ready access to their essentials, such as, for example, wallet, keys, cell phone, etc.

[0037] Also, side, slit "pockets" preferably are included to allow the adult users' hands to be inserted to be kept warm and preferably also offer easy access to the baby and the interior storage pouch, but using over-lapping, "J" configured, interior flaps initially isolating the "pocket" openings from the baby until the adult user's hands have been more completely inserted into the interior.

[0038] Likewise, a preferred hood/collar arrangement provides a further seal against the environment whether the child is facing in (as a hood) or out (over the child's shoulders), preferably along with inverted box pleats or the like providing expandable sides with extra material and "give" for the child to freely move about, yet maintain a tailored appearance.

[0039] Preferably side cinch straps are included to allow the effective length (depth/height) of the carrier cover to be adjusted to best fit the size of the child.

[0040] Also elastic loop members preferably are included above the cinch straps in the side panels of the cover.

[0041] It is further noted that the preferred embodiment of the cover can be used with multiple devices, including, for example, soft infant carriers, car seat carriers, hand-held carriers, strollers, etc. Thus, it should be understood that the term "carrier" as used herein includes a baby's or young

child's car seat, hand-carried carriers, baby carriers attached on the front of the body of the adult users, strollers, bouncers, and the like.

[0042] Currently the most preferred embodiment of the invention described in detail below includes all of the foregoing features but other embodiments of the invention can include fewer features and still incorporate patentable features of the invention as defined by the claims presented below in light of this specification.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0043] For a further understanding of the nature and objects of the present invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like elements are given the same or analogous reference numbers, and wherein:

[0044] **FIG. 1** is a frontal, perspective view of, for example, the baby's mother holding her baby (facing towards the mother) using an exemplary, prior art baby carrier, attached to and positioned at the front of the mother, with the exemplary embodiment of the cover of the present invention in its final disposition covering the baby but with the "hood" panels unfastened and hanging down at the top front of the cover and with the mother's hands (one side seen) inserted into the side, slit pockets of the cover.

[0045] **FIG. 1A** is a view similar in perspective to that of **FIG. 1** but without the cover embodiment of the invention added, that is, showing just the prior art "Baby Björn" type, front carrier alone.

[0046] **FIG. 2** is a rear, partially inside view of the baby carrier cover; and

[0047] **FIG. 3** is a front/exterior view of the baby carrier cover with dashed lines used to indicate features of the cover which can not be directly seen and with the two, sidewardly facing, dashed "Js" outlining additional fabric that creates overlaps associated with side slit or slash "pockets" so that, when a parent uses the slash pockets, the baby is not immediately subjected to the outside air; thus, when a parent places their hands in the slash pockets, their palms pass over those "J" shaped panels which cover the baby; while

[0048] **FIG. 3A** is a front/outside, perspective view of the baby carrier cover without the hood/collar (to simplify viewing) and better see the cover's rear "cut-out" area.

[0049] **FIG. 4** is a frontal, perspective view of the mother with the baby positioned looking forward (away from the mother) and with the substantially triangular "hood" panels in their collar disposition covering around the baby's neck and over its shoulders; while

[0050] **FIG. 5** is a side view of the mother with the baby positioned alternatively looking rearward (toward the mother) and with the hood panels raised and snapped together so that the baby is completely covered for maximum ambient protection and with the mother's hands (one side seen) inserted into the side, slit pockets, as in **FIG. 1**.

[0051] **FIG. 6** is a side, perspective view showing the cover used on a baby (positioned looking toward the mother and wearing its own clothing's hood) with the "hood" panels unfastened and hanging down;

[0052] **FIGS. 7A & 7B** are side, frontal views showing the cover cinched up and then un-cinched, respectively, about the baby varying the cover's effective length in the "vertical" direction or height, with the baby positioned looking toward the adult, it being further noted that the "hood" panels are not illustrated for simplicity purposes; and

[0053] **FIG. 8** is a frontal, perspective view showing the baby positioned in an exemplary (prior art) rigid car seat with the baby sitting in this type of hand-carried carrier and with the front of the cover applied over the baby and the rear of the cover positioned under the baby's legs and above (on) the carrier's upper surface.

EXEMPLARY, CURRENT, BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0054] The currently preferred, exemplary embodiment **10** of the baby carrier cover will be described in connection with the figures hereof in connection with two types of exemplary baby or infant carriers, namely,

[0055] the exemplary, prior art, front worn carrier **100** (e.g., the "Baby Björn" commercial product) made of flexible, fabric materials and shown by itself in **FIG. 1A** and in connection with the exemplary embodiment **10** of the cover of the present invention in **FIGS. 1-7**, and

[0056] the exemplary hand-carried, rigid, car seat type of carrier **200** (made, for example, of plastic) of the prior art shown in **FIG. 8** in connection with the exemplary embodiment **10** of the cover of the present invention.

[0057] As is known, the flexible front carrier **100** of the prior art of **FIG. 1A** (e.g., a "BabyBjörn" baby carrier) includes a set of shoulder straps **101** from which is suspended a baby holder **102** into which the baby is placed and supported, along with a set of side straps **103** which go around to the back of the adult user securing the front carrier to the adult's body in association with the shoulder straps. Of course, other fasteners can be used, if so desired, to further attach the carrier **100** to be supported at the front, chest area of the adult user.

[0058] The baby can be put into the interior of the carrier holder **102** either facing forward or rearwardly (compare, for example, **FIGS. 4 & 5**). As can be seen, in such a prior art carrier **100**, the prior art carrier leaves the baby exposed to the ambient at the legs, arms and head areas, all of which extend out of the carrier or are otherwise exposed, a problem solved by the baby carrier cover embodiment of the present invention.

[0059] The over-all, basic structure of the currently preferred, exemplary embodiment **10** of the carrier cover of the present invention can best be seen in **FIGS. 2, 3 & 3A** and includes:

[0060] two, top, substantially triangular, downwardly extending, sub-panels **21** on the front side **70** forming alternatively a protective collar **21'** when the two panels are placed around the baby's neck as in **FIG. 4** or, alternatively, a hood **21"** about the baby's head when pulled up and snapped or otherwise fastened together using snaps **22** (or, alternatively, for example, using "Velcro,"[®] etc.) as in **FIG. 5**;

- [0061] a pair of distal end, encircling, cover shoulder straps **31**, the longer, central part of which forms a band of heavy duty material, which, as can be seen, extends around most of, if not all, of the side-to-side, top of the cover, with the encircling end portions being connected around the carrier's shoulder straps **101** using, for example, the snap sets shown in **FIG. 2** or other appropriate fasteners;
- [0062] a pair of encircling, cover front straps **41**;
- [0063] a pair of "vertically" disposed sleeves **42**, with each one located adjacent to and below a respective one of the front straps **41** for stowing the front straps, with the front strap **41** to the left in **FIG. 2** being loose ready to be looped through the front infant armholes of the carrier **100** and the one to the right being stored in its respective sleeve **42** for illustrative, comparative purposes;
- [0064] a pair of encircling, cover waist straps **51** located right above and adjacent to the bottom level of the rear cut-out **72** for looping around the carrier's waist straps; and
- [0065] an interior, zippered, storage pouch **61** with zipper pulls **62**.
- [0066] The longer, central portion of the shoulder straps **31** which forms a long band of heavy duty material provides structure to the cover and ensures that the cover may be fastened such that it does not sag.
- [0067] The main body of the exemplary embodiment **10** of the carrier cover can be box-like in shape as illustrated in its disposition in **FIG. 3** (note also **FIG. 3A**). The rear **71** of the cover **10** has a "cut-out" area **72** (see also **FIG. 3A**) that allows it to fit up around the soft front infant carrier **100**. The rear, cut-out area **72** dips down to accommodate the bottom part of the prior art carrier **100** when the cover **10** is slipped up over the bottom of the carrier and its inhabitant and attached to the carrier (preferably not directly to the adult user) with the cover's straps being used to connect directly to the juxtaposed, respective straps of the carrier.
- [0068] To better illustrate this rear, cut-out area **72**, note **FIG. 3A** which illustrates the carrier cover **10** without the hood/collar (to simplify viewing). The cover's front **70**, back **71**, sides **73**, the latter with their inverted box pleats **74**, and rectangular bottom **78** together providing a squared off, box-like interior, as well as the various strap sets **31**, **41** & **51**, all can be seen in **FIG. 3A**.
- [0069] The exemplary, currently preferred baby carrier cover **10** does not require any folding in its being applied and connected to the baby carrier. For example, to attach it to the carrier **100** with the baby in the carrier, one simply slides the cover **10** up and around the bottom of the carrier with the infant supported in it, and then affixes one or more or all of the three pairs of fastening straps **31**, **41** & **51** to the juxtaposed parts of the carrier **100**, as needed or desired. For example, the cover's shoulder straps **31** are merely inserted around the carrier's shoulder straps **101** and snapped back to the mating snaps on the longer, band portion of the shoulder straps on the cover, or otherwise appropriately fastened (using, for example, "Velcro,"[®] etc.), thereby affixing the upper part of the cover **10** directly to the carrier **100** and thus preferably not directly to the adult user.
- [0070] If the adult user chooses, he/she can snap the collar panels **21** together using the snaps **22**, or other appropriate fasteners, to form a hood **21"**, as shown in **FIG. 5**. It should be noted, in comparing **FIGS. 4 & 5**, that in the former the baby is positioned looking forward away from the mother, while in the latter the baby preferably is positioned alternatively looking rearward (toward the mother) with the hood panels **21"** raised and snapped or otherwise appropriately fastened together so that the baby effectively is completely covered for maximum ambient protection, particularly when the adult user is moving forward into, for example, a falling snow or blowing wind, etc.
- [0071] Of course, the baby with its own clothing may already have a hood (note **FIG. 6**), in which case the panels **21** can merely be left hanging down over the front **70** of the cover **10**. Of course, if so desired as an alternative arrangement, the "hood" panels **21** could be constructed in association with the top of the cover **10** so that they may be completely removed from the rest of the body of the cover **10**, when so desired, and then later reattached using, for example, snaps, "Velcro"[®] type hook and loop material, etc., when needed. However, it is important in the most preferred embodiment that the "hood/collar" panels be properly contoured or configured to alternatively be used as a hood and, alternatively, a collar for covering over the shoulders of the baby.
- [0072] Additionally, the adult can, if so desired, cinch up the sides **73** to appropriately adjust the baby carrier cover's length, that is, its depth or height (note effective lengths (depth/height of cover) indicated in comparing the side view of **FIGS. 7A & 7B**) using the well known type of illustrated cinch mechanism **75**, with its belt and its mating, fixed loop, provided preferably on both side panels **73** but at least on one of them.
- [0073] Preferably side slit "pockets"**76** are included at a mid-level at the side, front edges of the side panels **73** (note **FIG. 7B**) where they contact the side edges of the front panel **70**, allowing, for example, the adult user to insert his/her hands (note **FIGS. 1 & 5**) into the interior of the cover **10** to, for example, keep warm and/or to access the interior pouch **61** or touch the child, etc.
- [0074] Further in regard to applying the cover **10** to the front carried carrier **100**, the adult user attaches the carrier **100** to the front of his/her body and the baby secured in the carrier **100**, all in accordance with the carrier's manufacturer's instructions, which can vary from manufacturer to manufacturer and carrier to carrier. The cover **10** is held so that the hanging collar/hood panels **21** are facing out and the cover then pulled up so that the baby's legs and body are encased.
- [0075] The cover attachment, shoulder and waist strap sets **31**, **51** are attached around the carrier's shoulder **101** and waist straps **103** (note **FIGS. 5 & 6**), respectively. To prevent sagging in front, the front straps **41** preferably are secured through the standard infant armholes on the carrier as well.
- [0076] Preferably the cover's straps should only encircle portions of the carrier **100** and never the baby's limbs or around the adult user's shoulders or limbs. When not using the front straps **41**, they should be stowed in the interior, vertically disposed, pockets or sleeves **42** having closure

snaps or other appropriate fasteners, thus keeping the front straps away from the baby to prevent any entanglement with the baby.

[0077] When being used in association with, for example, a stroller or car seat or hand-carried carrier 200 (where the child is facing out or forward, as shown in FIG. 8), one simply slides the rear panel 71 of the carrier cover 10 up so that the child's legs rest directly on the back 71 of the cover, with the cover not going under the carrier 200 as was done with the carrier 100 but placed on the carrier's top surface. In this process the front 70 of the cover is slid up over the top of the body of the baby.

[0078] The weight of the child's legs typically should be sufficient to hold the cover 10 in place. The front straps 41 are stowed in the sleeves 42, preventing the possibility that the covered baby/child could get entangled in them, while the shoulder straps 31 are closed and tucked to the side or behind the child's shoulders. The waist straps 51 preferably are looped around the carrier's harness's waist straps for still greater securement.

[0079] As can be seen in FIGS. 7A & 7B, the cover 10 preferably has elastic loops 77 above the cinching mechanism 75 in the inverted box pleats 73 (74) which can be used to hook the cover 10 onto some models of infant car seats. It is noted, however, that not all infant car seats have an area where this particular approach can be used. Other fastenings could, of course, be provided for other types of car seats, bouncers, etc, if so desired.

Exemplary Dimensions

[0080] Exemplary approximate dimensions of the various cover panels are:

[0081] Front Panel (70): about 12.5"×18.5"

[0082] Side Panel (73): about 5.5"×18.5"

or, for a further, currently more preferred example:

[0083] Front Panel (70): about 12.5"×23"

[0084] Side Panel (73): about 5.5"×23"

[0085] The rear dimensions (71) generally may be the same as the front panel 70, but with the cut-out 72 being deleted, which "cut-out" can be an exemplary approximately about six and a half(6.5") inches across and extending about ten (10") inches down from the top, with the "hood" panels 21 each being an exemplary about ten by eleven (10"×11") inches, appropriately contoured.

[0086] Exemplary materials for making the cover 10 include, for example, fleece, woven cotton, cotton corduroy, supplex, faux fur, etc.

[0087] It should be understood, however, that the exemplary dimensions and particular materials and configurations of the various baby carrier cover parts are subject to great variation.

[0088] It should be understood that, in the context of this specification, the term "adult" or "parent" refers to any sufficiently old user, not necessarily one of the age of majority or eighteen or twenty-one plus, but also including a younger, sufficiently strong and tall user who can accommodate baby carriers such as those of the types illustrated herein, as well as others to which the carrier cover of the

present invention may be applied. Additionally, the term "baby" as used herein likewise includes young children who are young enough and small enough to be accommodated in baby carriers of the types such as those illustrated herein, as well as others to which the carrier cover of the present invention may be applied.

[0089] It is noted that the embodiment described herein in detail for exemplary purposes is of course subject to many different variations in structure, size, design, application and methodology. Because many varying and different, additional embodiments may be made within the scope of the inventive concepts herein taught, and because many modifications may be made in the embodiment herein detailed in accordance with the descriptive requirements of the law, it is to be understood that the details herein are to be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense unless called for in one or more of the following claims and only to the extent as dependently claimed below.

What is claimed is:

1. A baby carrier cover system used by an adult user for a baby/child carrier and the like, comprising:

a cover having a bottom, a front panel, a rear panel and two side panels, one being a right side panel and the other side being a left side panel together at least partially forming a top, all of which are made of flexible material and are assembled into an integral body forming an interior into which the baby/child can be placed being of a size and configuration to encase and cover over a baby/child's body, with the baby/child's feet directed toward said bottom and his/her head directed up out of said top; and wherein—

said right and left side panels each includes at least one, inverted, box/accordion-like pleat, with said bottom being at least generally rectangular, allowing in combination enough material and "give" so that the baby/child can freely move his/her arms and legs within the interior of said cover, said side panels providing a side expandable interior resulting in added room for the baby/child to comfortably move about, flail about, kick and the like.

2. The baby carrier cover system of claim 1, wherein said cover has shoulder, front and waist areas; and wherein there is further included:

several, different, attaching strap sets attached to said cover, located at said shoulder, front and waist areas of said cover, respectively; said front straps being useable to prevent sagging and to distribute the combined weight of the carrier cover and the baby/child beyond said shoulder straps, while said waist straps allow the adult user to remove the carrier cover from the baby child, while still keeping said cover attached to the carrier via said waist straps.

3. The baby carrier cover system of claim 2, wherein:

said strap sets allow an adult user to undo said shoulder straps and said front straps to remove the carrier cover from the baby/child's shoulders and torso, while keeping the waist straps attached so that the baby/child's legs remain covered.

4. The baby carrier cover system of claim 2, wherein:

said shoulder straps are extensions of a horizontal, elongated band of heavy duty material extending at least

from said right side panel to said left side panel, said horizontal band providing side-to-side structure and support to said cover.

5. The baby carrier cover system of claim 2, wherein the carrier has a body and attachment straps including shoulder and waist straps; and wherein:

said cover's shoulder straps and said waist straps in combination provide a "vertically" spaced carrier attachment, using preferably at least two, vertically spaced strap sets, said shoulder straps and said waist straps, to connect said cover directly to the carrier's body attachment straps, cover-shoulder-strap-to-carrier-shoulder-strap and cover-waist-strap-to-carrier-waist-strap, without needing any cover attachment directly to the adult user, resulting in a stable fastening of said cover to the carrier, vertically spaced a significant distance, of at least about six or more inches, and spaced side-to-side by the width separation distance(s) of the carrier's shoulder and waist straps.

6. The baby carrier cover system of claim 1, wherein there is further included:

at least one side slit pocket in said cover, providing an adult user with a way to keep their own hands warm and have easy access to the covered baby/child.

7. The baby carrier cover system of claim 6, wherein there is included:

an interior, storage pouch having its own interior and is located within said interior of said cover and in proximity to said side slit pocket, said side slit pocket providing access to said interior of said storage pouch by the adult user.

8. The baby carrier cover system of claim 7, wherein:

said storage pouch has an access opening into the interior of said pouch of a size to allow access of an adult size hand and a closure device allowing said opening to be quickly and easily opened and closed.

9. The baby carrier cover system of claim 1, wherein:

said front panel of the cover is topped by two, generally triangular panels, which form a divided collar which has the capability to be wrapped around the sides of the covered baby/child's neck and over the covered baby/child's shoulders to help seal out the elements and which, alternatively, may be reconfigured to be fastened together forming a hood fully surrounding the covered baby/child's head, including the child's head's sides.

10. The baby carrier cover system of claim 1, wherein said side panels include:

a cinching system which allows the adult user to adjust the carrier cover's effective length to accommodate a covered baby/child's particular height.

11. A baby carrier cover system for use by an adult user to be used in association with a child carrier and the like, in which the carrier has shoulder and waist attachment straps for a baby/child in the carrier, comprising:

a cover having a bottom, a front panel, a rear panel and two side panels, one being a right side panel and the other side being a left side panel together at least partially forming a top, all of which are made of flexible material and are assembled into an integral body forming an interior into which the baby/child can

be placed being of a size and configuration to encase and cover over a baby/child's body, with the baby/child's feet directed toward said bottom and his/her head directed up out of said top, said cover further having shoulder, front and waist areas; and

several, different, attaching strap sets attached to said cover, including shoulder straps, front straps and waist straps located at said shoulder, front and waist areas of said cover, respectively, and connected to the attachment straps on the carrier, said front straps being useable to prevent sagging and to distribute the combined weight of the carrier cover and the baby/child beyond said shoulder straps, while said waist straps allow the adult user to remove the upper portion of said cover from the baby child, while still keeping said cover attached to the carrier via said waist straps.

12. The baby carrier cover system of claim 11, wherein the carrier has a body and associated attachment straps, including shoulder and waist straps; and wherein:

said cover's shoulder straps and said waist straps in combination provide a "vertically" spaced carrier attachment, using preferably at least two, vertically spaced strap sets, said shoulder straps and said waist straps, to connect said cover directly to the carrier's body attachment straps, cover-shoulder-strap-to-carrier-shoulder-strap and cover-waist-strap-to-carrier-waist-strap, without needing any cover attachment directly to the adult user, resulting in a stable fastening of said cover to the carrier, vertically spaced a significant distance, of at least about six or more inches, and spaced side-to-side by the width separation distance(s) of the carrier's shoulder and waist straps.

13. The baby carrier cover system of claim 11, wherein:

said strap sets allow an adult user to undo said shoulder straps and said front straps to remove the carrier cover from the baby/child's shoulders and torso, while keeping said waist straps attached so that the baby/child's legs remain covered.

14. The baby carrier cover system of claim 11, wherein:

said right and left side panels each includes at least one, inverted, box/accordion-like pleat, with said bottom being at least generally rectangular, allowing in combination enough material and "give" so that the baby/child can freely move his/her arms and legs within the interior of said cover, said side panels providing a side expandable interior resulting in added room for the baby/child to comfortably move about, flail about, kick and the like.

15. The baby carrier cover system of claim 14, wherein said side panels include:

a cinching system which allows the adult user to adjust the carrier cover's effective length to accommodate a covered baby/child's particular height.

16. A baby carrier cover system for a child carrier and the like, comprising:

a cover having a bottom, a front panel, a rear panel and two side panels, one being a right side panel and the other side being a left side panel together at least partially forming a top, all of which are made of flexible material and are assembled into an integral body forming an interior into which the baby/child can

be placed being of a size and configuration to encase and cover over a baby/child's body, with the baby/child's feet directed toward said bottom and his/her head directed up out of said top, said cover further having shoulder, front and waist areas;

an elongated band of heavy duty material attached to said cover and extending at least from said right side panel to said left side panel, said horizontal band providing side-to-side structure and support to said cover; and

a set of shoulder straps attached to said cover at said shoulder area, said shoulder straps being extensions of said horizontal band.

17. The baby carrier cover system of claim 16, wherein there is further included:

several, different, attaching strap sets attached to said cover including shoulder straps, front straps and waist straps, located at said shoulder, front and waist areas of said cover, respectively; said front straps being useable to prevent sagging and to distribute the combined weight of the carrier cover and the baby/child beyond said shoulder straps, while said waist straps allow the adult user to remove the carrier cover from the baby child, while still keeping said cover attached to the carrier via said waist straps.

18. The baby carrier cover system of claim 16, wherein:

said right and left side panels each includes at least one, inverted, box/accordion-like pleat, with said bottom being at least generally rectangular, allowing in combination enough material and "give" so that the baby/child can freely move his/her arms and legs within the interior of said cover, said side panels providing a side expandable interior resulting in added room for the baby/child to comfortably move about, flail about, kick and the like.

19. A method of covering a child/baby with a cover by an adult user while the baby/child is in a baby carrier or the like, comprising the following steps:

- (a) providing a cover having a bottom, a front panel, a rear panel and two side panels, one being a right side panel and the other side being a left side panel together at least partially forming a top, all of which are made of flexible material and are assembled into an integral body forming an interior into which the baby/child can be placed being of a size and configuration to encase and cover over a baby/child's body, with the baby/child's feet directed toward said bottom and his/her head directed up out of said top, said cover further having shoulder, front and waist areas, with there being included several, different, attaching strap sets attached to said cover, including shoulder straps, front straps and waist straps, located at said shoulder, front and waist areas of said cover, respectively;
- (b) initially connecting said shoulder straps, front straps and waist straps; to attachment straps on the carrier; and
- (c) thereafter the adult user undoing said shoulder straps and said front straps to remove the carrier cover from the baby/child's shoulders and torso, while keeping said waist straps attached so that the baby/child's legs remain covered.

20. The baby covering method of claim 19, wherein there is included in replacement of step "c" above, the step of:

- (c) the adult user undoing said shoulder straps and said front straps to remove the carrier cover from the baby/child's shoulders and torso, while keeping the waist straps attached so that the baby/child's legs remain covered.

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