

CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE EARLY  
CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND  
RELATION TO EFFICACY

By

MALLORY I. OLIVER

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Oklahoma State University

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CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE EARLY  
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RELATION TO EFFICACY

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Julia Atilis

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Thesis Adviser

Dr. Matt Brosi

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Committee Member

Dr. Toni Ivey

---

Committee Member

Name: MALLORY IVIE OLIVER

Date of Degree: MAY 2013

Title of Study: CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE EARLY CHILDHOOD  
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Abstract: After a parental divorce, many children exhibit stress responses and effects from the experience. Preservice teachers need to be prepared to help these students in an appropriate manner. The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on children. Seventy-two undergraduate students of the Early Childhood Education program at a Midwestern University participated in the study. Knowledge of the effects of a parental divorce on a child and the knowledge of the stress responses exhibited by a child due to a parental divorce were assessed. Preservice teachers had moderate knowledge about the stress responses and effects of divorce on children. Results indicated that preservice teachers who had a high sense of efficacy also had a positive correlation with their overall knowledge about children of divorce. If preservice teachers had personally experienced a parental divorce, their knowledge about the stress responses and effects of divorce were higher compared to those who had not personally experienced a parental divorce. The timing of when the divorce occurred during the preservice teachers' life did not significantly impact their understanding about how divorce affects children and the stress responses they can experience.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Divorce has become more common in society; almost a third of children will experience parental divorce or remarriage by the time they are 18 years old (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Children are in classrooms with teachers who spend many hours a day with them and who oftentimes influence their lives beyond academics. When comparing children of divorce to children with continuously married parents, children of divorce have been found to have drastically more adjustment problems in multiple areas of their lives (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

One of the adjustment problems children of divorce face is having trouble with their academic achievements. They have been shown to score lower on achievement and academic tests in the months directly following a divorce and are two to three times more likely to drop out before their high school graduation, compared to children of continuously married parents (Kelly & Emery, 2003). The reduction in academic achievement suggests that the teachers of these students must be prepared to help them overcome the challenges they face in the classroom stemming from the changes in their home. Many preservice teachers may not be prepared through their educational training

to help students of divorce due to a lack of knowledge of the effects of divorce on children or how stress responses may vary by age.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their students.

### **Research Questions**

1. How knowledgeable are preservice early childhood teachers regarding the different stress responses children can exhibit due to parental divorce?
2. How knowledgeable are preservice early childhood teachers regarding the effects of divorce on children?
3. Is there a relationship between the teachers' sense of efficacy and their knowledge of effects on and stress responses to divorce?
4. A) Do preservice teachers, who have experienced parental divorce, have a greater understanding of the stress responses and the effects of divorce on a child greater than preservice teachers who have not experienced a parental divorce?  
B) Does the timing of preservice teachers' parental divorce make a difference in their perceptions of the effects of and children's stress responses to divorce?
5. Do preservice teachers' knowledge of effects on and children's stress responses to divorce increase steadily as they progress through their teacher preparation program?

### **Definitions**

1. Divorce: the legal breakup of a marriage. Almost half of all U.S. marriages end in divorce. Like every major life change, divorce is stressful. It affects finances, living

arrangements, household jobs, schedules and more. If the family includes children, they may be deeply affected (Medline Plus, n.d.)

2. Preservice teacher: one who has declared an education major, but has not yet completed training to be a teacher. Preservice teachers typically complete a period observing teachers at different levels and then an internship or student teaching experience working alongside a mentor or master teacher before licensed as professional educators (Glossary of Education, n.d.).
3. Efficacy: how people view their ability to handle events in their lives; as a result, these beliefs affect life decisions, motivation levels, how well individuals function, and how well they overcome adversity and deal with stress. Because life offers many hardships and setbacks, people must have a strong sense of efficacy to persevere and succeed. Lastly, Bandura (1994) suggests that efficacy is life-long, dynamic, and necessary aspect of successful functioning.
4. Resilience: when children are capable of doing well in the face of adversity (Patterson, 2002).



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As the prevalence of divorce increases so does the number of children who are experiencing the stress of such family circumstances. Research has well established that these stressors have an impact on children's academic performance and overall well-being. Thus, teachers may be in a position to mediate the stressors in a positive way if they are able to recognize the symptoms and behaviors of a child who is experiencing a parental divorce. The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their students.

The review of the literature presents current research knowledge regarding divorce, its effects on young children, effects on children's academic success and how teachers may positively alleviate the stress of a parental divorce.

#### **Divorce**

The most common end of marriage in the current decade is divorce, unlike in centuries past when it used to be death of a spouse (Fincham & Beach, 2010). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had been predicted that almost half of all marriages would end in

divorce (Amato, 2010). In addition, when remarriages occur, and the wife brings in children from the previous marriage, it is more likely that the second marriage will end in divorce faster than when the first divorce happened (Teachman, 2008). These divorces do not just affect the two adults in the relationship but also their children. Within the past two decades more than 20 million children have experienced a parental divorce (Frisco, Muller, & Frank, 2007). It is estimated that over 60% of U.S. children born in the 1990s will live in a single-parent household due to divorce before they are 18 years old (Frisco et al., 2007).

Due to the high rate of divorce, marriage dissolution is now considered a public health issue because of the vast amount of children who are faced with multiple adjustment problems post-divorce (Støksen, Røysamb, Holmen, & Tambs, 2006). Many parents may not realize how deeply their divorce can affect their children's lives and those of others who are connected with the family. In addition to the parents dealing with the divorce, the children have to cope with a major change in which they likely had no choice. Since divorce is becoming more prevalent in today's society, we must understand how it affects the children who are involved in these families in order for other significant adults, such as teachers, to be of assistance.

**Divorce affects the children.** Divorce is seen as a major stressful event for children and can affect many areas of their lives for months and even years (Amato & Cheadle, 2008). Children's response to stress and the understanding of the parental divorce may vary by age. Preschool aged children may exhibit multiple stress symptoms such as heightened irritability, aggression, increased emotional episodes along with amplified anxiety towards strangers, and excessive clinginess with a trusted adult (Pickar,

2003). Typically children six years or younger blame themselves for their parents' divorce since these younger children tend to be more egocentric (Foulkes-Jamison, 2009). Young children also may show physical manifestations of stress from the divorce such as stomachaches, headaches, tiredness, or experience depression, anxiety, or sadness (Pickar, 2003). Research has demonstrated that compared to children from intact families, children of divorced families are more at risk for adjustment problems (Miller, Kliwer, & Partch, 2010). Gender differences have been noted regarding boys' and girls' adjustment. Specifically, researchers have found that boys tend to become more aggressive and disobedient, while girls become more withdrawn and anxious (Foulkes-Jamison, 2009).

The family instability throughout the divorce has been correlated with poorer outcomes for the children due in part to a common lack of social or economic resources in post-divorce families (Brown, 2006). Apart of this family instability, many children after the divorce will enter a home that is headed by a single parent. Single parents are often depleted of their resources, such as time, energy, and emotional availability that could be spent fostering a relationship with the children after the divorce (Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007). This can leave the children feeling forgotten and thus further increasing their risks of adjustment problems after the divorce. Furthermore, single parents have to take on the role of both parents after the divorce. They tend to become overly stressed compared to two-parent homes since they have more responsibilities associated with being the sole caregiver for all the family members. In addition, single parents are often times impacted by diminished financial resources (Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). Parenting styles of single parents have been found to

transform into more of an authoritarian style with coercive cycles, being highly controlling, and showing little warmth towards their children (Garg, et al., 2007).

Strohschein, Noralou, and Brownell (2009) stated that the life course approach is the socially meaningful events in a person's life, such as a parental divorce, does not just change that person's life but also changes other individuals' lives that are connected to the family. This asserts that a divorce will affect everyone who is around the couple: the parents, children, extended family, friends and anyone else who is involved with the family, creating stress for all. The stress of divorce increases the risks of social and emotional maladjustment, not just in children's home lives but also in their classroom, school, and community.

**The effects of the social and emotional stress of divorce on children.** The Standard Family Effects Model states that because of parental conflict and divorce, children tend to have many behavioral problems in school and at home due to the new emotional stress (Amato & Cheadle, 2008). Compared to their counterparts of intact families, children from divorced families exhibit lower self-esteem and greater behavioral and emotional problems, especially in the classroom (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010). If they experience problems relating socially to other children in school during the scheduled socialization times, children of divorce may feel further alienated. This makes them feel like they are the only one experiencing the emotional instability. This alienation may also come from children lacking the coping skills necessary to deal with the emotions that they experience following the divorce (Foulkes-Jamison, 2009). Through the parental divorce and the transitions that follow, children can have anxieties and emotional instability that affect their adjustment (Sun & Li, 2008).

The timing of a divorce can have different social and emotional stress depending on the age of the child. Parental divorce early in a child's life is associated with an earlier onset of emotional problems that can continue on later through life (D'Onofrio et al., 2006). Pickar (2003) stated that the stress that divorce can put on the child may physically manifest. Often times adolescents exhibit emotional problems that stem from a childhood parental divorce. They may act out in school, have uncontrollable anger, increased depression, engage in risky sexual behavior and experiment with drugs and alcohol (Pickar, 2003). Thus, families who are experiencing major life transitions, such as divorce, create compromising situations for their children's emotional well-being during and long after the divorce is over (Cavanagh & Huston, 2008).

After a divorce, some single parents will enter into another marriage, which forces the child into a new family of which they may not wish to be a part. With the transition into a new home after divorce, parenting can become inconsistent and family routines can become disrupted. This can contribute to a child's emotional insecurity with the parent, resulting in a weaker parent-child relationship (Brown, 2006). The family instability perspective states that the family is the source of stability, security, and predictability for children (Sun & Li, 2008), and since the child has now been forced into a new home, it can cause emotional and social upset in the child's well-being. Along with this new family, the parents may unintentionally alienate their biological child due to new family relationships, compromising their biological child's self-esteem and well-being (Baker, & Ben-Ami, 2011). When children have a supportive parent child relationship after parental divorce with one or both parents, children are better able to regulate their own emotions and behaviors in the home and in their social environment (Bradley, 2007).

The parents' sensitivity to the child's emotional needs following a divorce is one of the largest contributors to a child's adjustment (Foulkes-Jamison, 2009). Along with social and emotional stress that comes from parental divorce, children's grades and educational achievement can also be disrupted. Therefore, teachers may also play a very important role in facilitating a child's adjustment.

**The effects of divorce on children's academic achievements.** Children of divorce are more at risk for educational disadvantages than children who have both biological parents in their home (Björklund & Sundström, 2006; Heard, 2007). After a divorce, many parents tend to focus on themselves and the divorce conflict rather than on their children. Children of divorce tend to have a negative attitude towards school, less parental supervision over their homework, and lower parental educational expectations (Garg, et al., 2007; Støksen, et al., 2006). Furthermore, it has been found that a parental divorce before the age of 16 is associated with lower educational attainment in the child's life (D'Onofrio et al., 2006).

Twenty-nine percent of adolescents drop out of school if they live in a single-parent home after a parental divorce (Menning, 2006). Many families, after a divorce, may move to new towns, cities, or states to distance themselves from the experience. This residential change can cut off family support and social ties and the relocation can further put the child behind for lower academic achievement in school (Sun & Li, 2009). Typically, for many children, the divorce or change of residency is not their choice, which increases the importance of the new social environment. The risks of trouble or failure that divorce can bring upon children in their academic career, the role that the

classroom environment, their teacher, and their peers play can be critical in fostering the child's resiliency in the months after the divorce.

**How can a supportive classroom help children of divorce.** When children have a place to find support and comfort, they are better able to regulate their emotions and feel like they are not alone (Lowe, 2009). One place that tends to remain relatively consistent and that could provide support and comfort is the classroom they are in each day, with their peers and teacher. A strong, encouraging, warm, and secure relationship with at least one biological parent or teacher, serves as a buffer from the risks associated with divorce and encourages resiliency (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010). This buffer may also serve as a venue for children to become resilient in their classroom environment.

The classroom environment can promote peer support and mutual empathy between other students who are also experiencing parental divorce (Somody & Hobbs, 2007). The supportive group environment of the classroom may also increase student's connectedness towards other students and the teacher (Somody & Hobbs, 2007). In order for the children to feel safe, secure, and encouraged to take risks in the classroom, they need to feel connected within the classroom environment, with the teacher, and with their peers. If teachers create a safe environment in the classroom that promotes creativity, children of divorce are given an outlet to process, express, and describe their experiences and struggles with their parents divorce (Somody & Hobbs, 2007). Thus, it is important for teachers to have a high sense of efficacy so that they are better able to meet and recognize the needs of the students who may be experiencing a parental divorce. The higher the teachers' sense of efficacy, the better the outcomes for their students, such as better student achievement (Cousins & Walker, 1995; Guskey, 1988).

Research has found that teachers with higher efficacy exhibit more passionate dispositions about helping their students' with their school work, helping them gain confidence within themselves, and creating the safe environment for their students within the classroom (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). In the school, students are able to gain new relationships, find resources and activities that can help them find a structure and a sense of normality in their lives after the traumatic event in the home (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012). Researchers have not addressed whether preservice early childhood teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge to help out their students in the event of a parental divorce. Furthermore, research has not explored the possible relationship between efficacy and teachers' ability to respond to the needs of a child experiencing divorce in their family.

### **Current Study**

The literature states that children of divorce are more at risk for academic, social, emotional, and behavioral problems, compared to their counterparts of continuously married parents. Given the potential academic detriments of children of divorce and the high amount of contact and influence that teachers have in children's lives, it is important to assess the preparedness of preservice teachers in serving this population. The literature establishes that teachers with a high sense of efficacy persevere in their work with children, who are experiencing difficulties, academic as well as behavioral. Thus, this research study will give insight to preservice teachers' sense of efficacy in working with and their perceptions of children of divorce.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their future students.

#### **Research Questions**

1. How knowledgeable are preservice early childhood teachers regarding the different stress responses children can exhibit due to parental divorce?
2. How knowledgeable are preservice early childhood teachers regarding the effects of divorce on children?
3. Is there a relationship between the teachers' sense of efficacy and their knowledge of effects on and stress responses to divorce?
4. A) Do preservice teachers, who have experienced parental divorce, have a greater understanding of the stress responses and the effects of divorce on a child greater than preservice teachers who have not experienced a parental divorce?  
B) Does the timing of preservice teachers' parental divorce make a difference in their perceptions of the effects of and children's stress responses to divorce?

5. Do preservice teachers' knowledge of effects on and children's stress responses to divorce increase steadily as they progress through their teacher preparation program?

### **Participants**

All early childhood preservice undergraduate students at a Midwestern university were invited to participate in this research; 74 students participated. Participants answered a question in the demographic survey that identified at what level of the Early Childhood Education program they were enrolled. They had four choices: block one, block two, block three, or block four, with each block representing a semester. Block one is the beginning level of the program, with block four being the last semester of the program. Block four signifies that they are student teaching and will be finished at the end of that semester. All 74 participants were female and ranged in ages from 20 to 29-years-old ( $M = 21.22$ ). Block 1 had seven participants; block 2 had 20 participants; block 3 had 14 participants; and block 4 had 31 participants. Two questionnaires were eliminated from the sample due to incomplete responses.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The sampling procedure was one of convenience, assessing the students from the existing Early Childhood Education Program at a Midwestern university. In order to follow the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved protocol, one instructor from each block was asked for permission from the researchers to ask for participants during class time. The times were scheduled at the instructors' convenience. Researchers visited the classes, read the purpose, procedures, and benefits of the survey to the students. Participants were allowed to read information about the surveys and determine whether they were willing to volunteer for the research study. Consent forms were distributed

with a description of the project explaining there was no known risk associated with this research project. In this information sheet, the participants were informed that participation was voluntary and subjects could discontinue the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty. A copy of the IRB approval can be found in Appendix B.

### **Measures**

Participants answered a questionnaire consisting of demographic questions, the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale-long form* (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and the *Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale* constructed by the researcher based on research from Foulkes-Jamison (2009) and Pickar (2003).

**Demographics questionnaire.** (Appendix A) A demographics questionnaire was used in order to gather information about each participant's personal and teaching backgrounds. Questions regarding personal background included their age, gender, race classification, if they have personally experienced a parental divorce and, if so, at what age the divorce occurred. Questions regarding participants' teaching background included what grade-level they had experienced as a student intern. Participants answered a question in the demographic survey that identified their current level in the Early Childhood Education program.

**Teachers' sense of efficacy scale-long form.** (Appendix A) Participants completed the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale-long form* (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This scale contains 24-items. Participants chose options from the Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*nothing*) to 9 (*a great deal*). The authors of the scale reported a cronbach alpha of .94 with  $M = 7.1$  and  $SD = .94$ , deemed the scale as reliable.

**Perceptions of children of divorce scale.** The Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale (PCDS) found in Appendix A, developed by the researcher, is based on the work of Foulkes-Jamison (2009) that examined the effects of divorce on children, and Pickar (2003) who identified the different stress responses children can exhibit due to divorce. The PCDS consists of 23 questions. Factor analysis yielded two distinct subscales. The first subscale of 12 questions measures the participants' knowledge of the stress responses that children exhibit after a parental divorce. To create this subscale the researcher reviewed Foulkes-Jamison (2009) and pinpointed the different effects that children experience during a parental divorce. To obtain the participants' knowledge of the stress responses, the participants' answers were summed to a score ranging from 12 to 72. The researcher took the total possible points and divided evenly into four subcategories to align with a typical scale range. A score between 12-27 equated to little to no knowledge, 27-42 equated to minimal knowledge, 42-57 equated to moderate knowledge, and 57-72 equated to high knowledge of the different stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce.

The second subscale consisted of 11 questions and measured the participant's knowledge of the effects that a child could experience in a post-divorce home. In order to create this subscale, the work of Pickar (2003) was utilized by focusing on the table he created, "Symptoms of Stress and Adjustment Problems." To obtain the overall knowledge of the effects that a child could experience that the participant knew, their scores were summed to be a score ranging from 11 to 66. The researcher took the total possible points and divided evenly into four subcategories to align with a typical scale range a score between 11-24 equated to little to no knowledge, 25-38 equated to minimal

knowledge, 39-52 equated to moderate knowledge, and 53-66 equated to high knowledge of the different stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce.

The reliability statistics for the subscale measuring children's stress responses due to a divorce yielded a Cronbach's alpha .98. The reliability statistics for the subscale measuring the effects of divorce on children yielded the Cronbach's alpha .94, thus, indicating the questionnaire to be reliable.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND RELATION TO EFFICACY

#### **Abstract**

After a parental divorce, many children exhibit stress responses and adjustment problems caused by the experience. Teachers are in the unique position of to play a critical role in fostering the child's resiliency and need to be prepared to accommodate these students accordingly. The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their students. Seventy-two undergraduate Early Childhood Education preservice teachers in a Midwestern university responded to questionnaires that asked about demographic characteristics, knowledge of the effects of a parental divorce on a child, and knowledge of the stress responses exhibited by a child due to a parental divorce. Preservice teachers had moderate knowledge about the stress responses scoring an average of 52.57, where 72 was the maximum score possible. The average score of the responses to the effects divorce subscale was 45.70 out of a possible

maximum of 66. Preservice teachers who had a high sense of efficacy also had a moderate positive correlation with their overall knowledge about children of divorce  $r(72) = .455, p = .000$ . If preservice teachers had personally experienced a parental divorce, their knowledge about the stress responses and effects of divorce was higher than if they had not personally experienced a parental divorce  $F(1, 71) = 10.00, p = .00$ . Participants closer to completing the teacher preparation program had an overall higher knowledge about the effects on and stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce  $F(1, 69) = 6.71, p = .00$ .

## CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND DISPOSITIONS

As the prevalence of divorce increases so does the number of children who are experiencing the stress of such family circumstances. Research has well established that these stressors have an impact on children's academic performance and overall well-being (Amato & Cheadle, 2008; Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Heard, 2007). Thus, teachers may be in a position to mediate the stressors in a positive way if they are able to recognize the symptoms and behaviors of a child who is experiencing a parental divorce. The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their students.

The most common end of marriage in the current decade is divorce, unlike in centuries past when it used to be death of a spouse (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Within the past two decades more than 20 million children have experienced a parental divorce (Frisco, Muller, & Frank, 2007). It is estimated that over 60% of U.S. children born in the 1990s will live in a single-parent household due to divorce before they are 18 years old (Frisco et al., 2007). Many parents may not realize how deeply their divorce can affect their children's lives. In addition to parents dealing with the divorce, the children have to cope with a major change in which they likely had no choice.

Divorce is seen as a major stressful event for children and can affect many areas of their lives for months and even years afterwards (Amato & Cheadle, 2008). Children's response to stress and the understanding of the parental divorce may vary by age. Preschool aged children may exhibit multiple stress symptoms such as heightened



irritability, aggression, increased emotional episodes along with amplified anxiety towards strangers and excessive clinginess with a trusted adult (Pickar, 2003). Young children also may show physical manifestations of stress from the divorce such as stomachaches, headaches, tiredness or experience depression, anxiety, or sadness (Pickar, 2003). Research has demonstrated that compared to children from intact families, children of divorced families are more at risk for adjustment problems during post-divorce life (Miller, Kliewer, & Partch, 2010).

The family's instability throughout the divorce has been correlated with poorer outcomes for the children due in part to a common lack of social or economic resources in post-divorce families, especially single parent households (Brown, 2006). Single parents are often depleted of their resources, such as time, energy, and emotional availability that could be spent with their children fostering a relationship after the divorce (Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007). This can leave the children to feel like they are being forgotten and thus further increasing their risks of adjustment problems after the divorce. With the transition into a new home life after the divorce, parenting can become inconsistent and family routines disrupted. This can contribute to a child's emotional insecurity with the parent, resulting in a weaker parent-child relationship (Brown, 2006). After a divorce many parents tend to focus on themselves and the divorce conflict rather than on their children.

The stress of divorce increases the risks of social and emotional maladjustment, not just in their home life but also in their classroom, school, and community. The Standard Family Effects Model states that because of parental conflict and divorce, children tend to have many behavioral problems in school and at home due to the new

emotional stress (Amato & Cheadle, 2008). Children from divorced families exhibit lower self-esteem and greater behavioral and emotional problems that could last long after the divorce, especially in the classroom (Faber & Wittenborn, 2010; Cavanagh & Huston, 2008; and Sun & Li, 2008). Pickar (2003) states the stress that the divorce can put on the child may become physically manifested, even well into adolescence. Low self-esteem, behavioral and emotional problems can make it difficult for children to socialize and create relationships with their peers causing a feeling of alienation that could last into the adolescent years.

Children of divorce are more at risk for educational disadvantages than children who have both biological parents in their home (Björklund & Sundström, 2006; Heard, 2007). They tend to have negative attitudes towards school, less parental supervision over their homework, and lower parental educational expectations (Garg, et al, 2007 and Støksen, Røysamb, Holmen, & Tambs, 2006). Furthermore, research shows that a parental divorce before the age of 16 is associated with lower educational attainment in the child's life (D'Onofrio, Turkheimer, Emery, Slutske, Heath, Madden, & Martin, 2006). An expected 29% of adolescents drop out of school if they live in a single-parent home after a parental divorce (Menning, 2006). The risks of trouble or failure that divorce can bring upon children in their academic career and the role that the classroom environment, teacher, and peers play can be critical in fostering the child's resiliency in the months after the divorce.

When children have a place to find support and comfort, they are better able to regulate their emotions and feel like they are not alone (Lowe, 2009). One place that tends to remain relatively consistent and that could provide support and comfort is the

classroom they are in each day, with their peers and teacher. The classroom environment can promote peer support and mutual empathy between other students who are also experiencing parental divorce (Somody & Hobbs, 2007).

If teachers create an environment in the classroom that promotes creativity, children of divorce are given an outlet to process, express, and describe their experiences and struggles, even with their parent's divorce, in a safe environment (Somody & Hobbs, 2007). Previous research has indicated that teachers with higher efficacy exhibit more passionate dispositions about helping their students' with their school work, helping them gain confidence within themselves, and creating the safe environment for their students within the classroom (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). The higher the teachers' sense of efficacy, the better outcomes for their students, such as better student achievement (Cousins & Walker, 1995; Guskey, 1988). Thus, it is important for teachers to have a high sense of efficacy so that they are better able to meet and recognize the needs of the students that may be experiencing a parental divorce. In the school, students are able to gain new relationships, find resources and activities that can help them find a structure and a sense of normality in their lives after the traumatic event in the home (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

All Early Childhood preservice teachers at a Midwestern university were invited to participate in this research; 74 preservice teachers participated though two questionnaires were deleted due to being incomplete. Participants answered a demographic survey that identified in which of the four semesters that it takes to complete the program they were enrolled, gender, age, and ethnicity.

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), early childhood education instructors were asked for permission for the researchers to come during their class time and ask the students if they would participate and spend 20 minutes responding to the questionnaire. The times were prescheduled at the instructor's convenience. Researchers visited the classes, read the purpose, procedures and benefits of the survey to the students. Participants were then given a few minutes to read information about the surveys and determine whether they were willing to volunteer as participants of the research study. Consent forms were distributed with a description of the project explaining there was no known risk associated with this research project. In this information sheet, the participants were informed that participation was voluntary and subjects could discontinue the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty.

## Questionnaire

Participants responded to the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale-long form* (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This is a Likert type scale that contains 24 items with responses ranging from 1 (*nothing*) to 9 (*a great deal*). The authors of the scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .94 with  $M = 7.1$  and  $SD = .94$ , which indicated the scale as reliable.

In addition participants responded to the *Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale* (PCDS), constructed by the researcher based on research from Foulkes-Jamison (2009) and Pickar (2003). The PCDS has two subscales and a total of 23 questions. The first subscale has 12 questions measuring the participant's knowledge of the stress responses that children exhibit after a parental divorce. To create this subscale the researcher reviewed Foulkes-Jamison (2009) and pinpointed the different effects that children experience during a parental divorce. The reliability analysis for the divorce response scale yielded the Cronbach's alpha .98. A participant's knowledge of the stress responses was calculated by summing the responses to the subscale questions. Possible responses ranged from 12 to 72. The researcher took the total possible points and divided evenly into four subcategories to align with a typical scale range. A score between 12-27 equated to little to no knowledge, 27-42 equated to minimal knowledge, 42-57 equated to moderate knowledge, and 57-72 equated to high knowledge of the different stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce.

The second subscale is comprised of 11 questions assessing the participant's knowledge of the effects of divorce on children. In order to create this subscale, the work of Pickar (2003) was utilized by focusing on the table he created, "Symptoms of Stress and Adjustment Problems." The reliability statistic for the divorce effects scale yielded a

Cronbach's alpha (.95). The overall knowledge of the effects of divorce on children was calculated by summing the responses to the 11 questions, ranging from 11 to 66. The researcher took the total possible points and divided evenly into four subcategories to align with a typical scale range. A score between 11-24 equated to little to no knowledge, 25-38 equated to minimal knowledge, 39-52 equated to moderate knowledge, and 53-66 equated to high knowledge of the different stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce.

1. Have you personally experienced a parental divorce?  
 Yes  No
2. If so indicate how old were you when your parents separated?  
 0-5 Years Old  10-15 Years Old  
 5- 10 Years Old  15 Years or Older

### Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate number to the right of each statement pertaining to the child within the year following the initial events of the divorce.

<b>Within a year of the initial events of divorce, a child would experience:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. Heightened irritability	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Physical aggression towards self or others	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Increased temper tantrums	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Excessive clinginess	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Increased stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Physical manifestation of stress (headaches, stomachaches, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Tiredness	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Lessened interest in schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Depression	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Anger	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Increased anxiety	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Fear of abandonment	1	2	3	4	5	6

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. A parent's sensitivity to their child's needs after the divorce is an important factor in the child's adjustment post-divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
2. Girls may become more withdrawn and anxious than boys.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
3. Children can adjust quickly after the divorce if a routine is established as soon as possible.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
4. A child may lack the necessary coping skills needed to comprehend and handle a parental divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
5. Children under the age of six may often blame themselves for their parent's divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
6. Boys and girls may react differently to a parental divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
7. The most critical part of a child's adjustment after the divorce is his or her relationship with at least one parent.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
8. Children can quickly adjust to post-divorce life.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
9. Boys may show more aggression and disobedience than girls.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
10. Families of divorce will experience economic changes within the year of the divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
11. A child may become anti-social with peers in fear of abandonment.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

Perceptions of Children of Divorce scale is based on *The Effects of Divorce on Children* (Foulkes-Jamison, L. 2001) and *Identifying Children's Stress-Response to Divorce* (Pickarm D. 2003).



## Results

The data were collected, coded, and analyzed. All the coded data was double-checked for accuracy by a co-rater. Analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics. Frequency distributions, means, medians, standard deviation, ranges, and correlations were calculated.

In order to determine how knowledgeable preservice teachers were regarding the different stress responses children can exhibit due to parental divorce, the researcher summed the responses to the appropriate subscale of the *Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale*. The descriptive statistics showed that overall the 72 respondents had a fairly moderate understanding regarding the different stress responses that children can exhibit due to a parental divorce ( $M = 52.57, SD = 18.83$ ). Scores from the second subscale helped determine how knowledgeable preservice teachers were regarding the effects of divorce on children. By looking at the descriptive statistics, the researcher concluded that preservice teachers scored in the moderate knowledge range ( $M = 45.70, SD = 15.18$ ). Through review of literature it was expected that preservice teachers with a strong sense of efficacy would have an overall good judgment of how to meet the needs of the children in their classroom (Cousins & Walker, 1995; Guskey, 1988). Consistent with what was expected from the literature, a positive, statistically significant correlation was found to be present with preservice teachers' sense of efficacy and with their knowledge regarding the effects divorce can have on children,  $r(72) = .455, p = .000$ .

All participants responded to a question on the demographic questionnaire indicating whether they had experienced a parental divorce. A frequency analysis revealed that out of the 72 respondents only 17, or 23%, had experienced a parental

divorce. A statistically significant difference was found between preservice teachers who had personally experienced a parental divorce and those who had not on their scores on the *Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale*  $F(2, 71) = 10.00, p = .00$ . The mean score of those who had experienced divorce was  $M = 53.29$  and those who had not was  $M = 54.25$ . The post hoc Tukey's HSD test indicated that the two groups differ significantly in their scores ( $p < .05$ ). Out of the 17 preservice teachers who had experienced a parental divorce, eight had experienced the divorce during early childhood (birth-10 years old) with an average score of 51.63 and a  $SD = 17.40$ , and nine preservice teachers had experienced a divorce later in their lives (10- 20 years old) with an average score of 54.78 and a  $SD = 12.29$ . Results indicated that there was no significant difference regarding the timing of the divorce experience of the participants and their knowledge of the effects of and children's stress responses to divorce  $F(1, 15) = .19, p = .67$ .

It would be assumed that as preservice teachers go through each step of their teacher preparation program, they increase their knowledge of how to meet the needs of their students and what the students might experience when they are enduring difficulties at home. In this study, as the preservice teachers continue through their teacher preparation program, their knowledge of the effects and children's stress responses to divorce increased  $F(1, 69) = 6.71, p = .00$ .

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether preservice early childhood teachers have the knowledge of the stress responses and effects of parental divorce on their early childhood-age students. The results of this study indicated that preservice teachers had moderate knowledge about both effects and stress responses that children

can exhibit during and after a parental divorce. Preservice teachers' sense of efficacy had a positive correlation with their knowledge regarding the effects on children and stress response they could exhibit as a result of parental divorce. This finding was consistent with the literature that the more efficacious teachers are, the more responsive they are to their students' needs (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

As students advance towards the completion of their teacher preparation program, there was an increase in knowledge about the stress responses and effects of divorce. Student teachers in their final semester of the program scored highest regarding knowledge about the stress responses and effects a child can exhibit as a result of parental divorce. This could be related to various reasons such as having more hands-on experience with children from different backgrounds throughout their field experience, or a result of a course on the third semester of the program that heavily addresses family dynamics.

An interesting aspect of the demographics was the participants' age range (20-29). Contrary to the research that 60% of children born in the 1990s will have experienced a parental divorce (Frisco et al., 2007), only 17 out of the 72 or 23% of the participants personally experienced a parental divorce. Future research may look at specific demographics about the preservice teachers that may explain the lower rate of divorce in their families. There is a need to investigate whether the demographics of the university student body tend to have lower percentages of students who have experienced a parental divorce before college. It is very probable that a university student may be less likely to have experienced a parental divorce since previous research states that many children of divorce families have lower academic achievements in post-divorce home life (D'Onofrio

et al., 2006). Parental income and parental educational attainment are highly correlated with children's educational achievement and negatively correlated with divorce (Tyson, 2012). Additionally it was found that regardless of the timing of the divorce in the participants' lives, their knowledge was significantly higher about the effects and stress responses of divorce than those of participants who had not experienced divorce.

A limitation of this study is the small sample size and that the study only reflects the perspective of Early Childhood Education students at one Midwestern university, creating a lack of diversity among the participants. Another limitation is that the participants were enrolled in an Early Childhood Education program housed in a Human Development and Family Science department, with course work requirements in the area of family systems and dynamics, which are not typical of teacher preparation programs housed in Colleges of Education. If this study were to be replicated, it is suggested that the sample size include more participants with greater diversity; it is also suggested a further study incorporate more teacher preparation programs including those who do not have a family science background, as the topic of this research impacts all teachers regardless of the grade level they teach.

As the literature previously stated, one of the biggest buffers of the negative effects of divorce a child can have is a strong parent-child relationship, which can translate into the classroom with a strong teacher-student relationship. It is important for teachers to give students that creative outlet that they can use to express their emotions in a healthy manner (Somody & Hobbs, 2007). Teachers must create a warm, encouraging environment where children can discuss their experience in social situations, and through these discussions, children may find that they are not alone. Also, through a daily routine,

students can have the feeling of stability that they need after change within their home life. The teachers of children of divorce need to understand the hardships that a divorce can bring such as economic issues, residency change, parental conflict, change in parenting styles, decreased academic involvement, and other stress inducers. During this difficult time, children are in great need of warmth, encouragement, support, and consistency—all strategies that are important for the teachers to provide within their classroom. It is, therefore, suggested that teacher preparation programs incorporate learning how to recognize the stress responses and effects of divorce that a child can exhibit during and after a parental divorce. Also the program should emphasize more of what teachers can do to help their students who have experienced a parental divorce.

Although all of these stress responses and effects may lessen after the divorce, teachers still need to be sensitive and sympathetic towards children's needs throughout the years following the divorce. It is extremely important that teachers do not speak badly of either parent in front of the child, which can become added stress for the child. The teacher needs to communicate with both parents directly about schoolwork and activities instead of leaving the responsibility of the communication to the child. This could include: providing two sets of copies of schoolwork, permission slips or announcements; holding two parent-teacher conferences; knowing the parent's custody schedule to ensure the child goes home with the correct parent for the evening. All of these strategies can alleviate the stress from the child by trying to communicate with both parents and helping children detangle themselves from parental conflicts. Teachers need to be sympathetic to children of divorce recognizing the stress and effects they experience due to the divorce,

and teacher preparation programs have an obligation to prepare preservice teachers for these experiences in their classrooms.

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## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
Questionnaires

### Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you male or female?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
-------------------------------	---------------------------------
3. What ECE block are you currently in?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Block 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Block 3
<input type="checkbox"/> Block 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Block 4
4. How would you classify yourself?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American	<input type="checkbox"/> White
5. What grade levels have you taught during your teaching experiences? Check all that apply.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 3 or younger	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <sup>st</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Kindergarten	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup>
6. How many students do you have in your current class? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Please indicate your religious affiliation:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Assembly of God	<input type="checkbox"/> Church of the Nazarene	<input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal Holiness Church
<input type="checkbox"/> Baptist	<input type="checkbox"/> Episcopal	<input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian
<input type="checkbox"/> Southern Baptist	<input type="checkbox"/> Jehovah 's Witness	<input type="checkbox"/> Reformed
<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic Church	<input type="checkbox"/> Latter Day Saints-Mormon	<input type="checkbox"/> Seventh Day Adventist
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran	<input type="checkbox"/> Non- denominational
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian Church (Independent)	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodist	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Church of Christ	<input type="checkbox"/> United Methodist Church	

## Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)

<b>Teachers Beliefs</b>	<b>How much can you do?</b>								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing	Very Little			Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge students comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

1. Have you personally experienced a parental divorce?

- Yes  No

2. If so indicate how old were you when your parents separated?

- 0-5 Years Old  10-15 Years Old  
 5- 10 Years Old  15 Years or Older

### Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate number to the right of each statement pertaining to the child within the year following the initial events of the divorce.

<b>Within a year of the initial events of divorce, a child would experience:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. Heightened irritability	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Physical aggression towards self or others	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Increased temper tantrums	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Excessive clinginess	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Increased stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Physical manifestation of stress (headaches, stomachaches, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Tiredness	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Lessened interest in schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Depression	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Anger	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Increased anxiety	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Fear of abandonment	1	2	3	4	5	6



<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. A parent's sensitivity to their child's needs after the divorce is an important factor in the child's adjustment post-divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
2. Girls may become more withdrawn and anxious than boys.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
3. Children can adjust quickly after the divorce if a routine is established as soon as possible.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
4. A child may lack the necessary coping skills needed to comprehend and handle a parental divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
5. Children under the age of six may often blame themselves for their parent's divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
6. Boys and girls may react differently to a parental divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
7. The most critical part of a child's adjustment after the divorce is his or her relationship with at least one parent.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
8. Children can quickly adjust to post-divorce life.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
9. Boys may show more aggression and disobedience than girls.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
10. Families of divorce will experience economic changes within the year of the divorce.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
11. A child may become anti-social with peers in fear of abandonment.					
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

Perceptions of Children of Divorce scale is based on *The Effects of Divorce on Children* (Foulkes-Jamison, L. 2001) and *Identifying Children's Stress-Response to Divorce* (Pickarm D. 2003).

APPENDIX B  
IRB Approval

## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, March 04, 2013  
IRB Application No HE1314  
Proposal Title: Early Childhood Education Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs About the Use of Corporal Punishment, the Importance of Physical Activity, and Perceptions of Children of Divorce  
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/3/2014**

Principal

Investigator(s):

Julia T. Atiles	Jennifer Carnley	Mallory Oliver
233 HES	233 HS	233 HS
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

✕ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Date

Dear ECE Instructor:

We would like to ask your permission to collect data for three related research projects in your class, HDFS xxxx. The purpose of these studies is to generate research knowledge that advances teaching and learning by demonstrating the impact of pre-service early childhood teachers' beliefs and values in their teaching practice. We are particularly interested in the impact of values and beliefs regarding opportunities for physical activity in the classroom, how to work with children undergoing the divorce process, and opinions regarding the use of physical punishment in the classroom.

We anticipate that data collection will take approximately 30 minutes of your class time. This time will involve students completing the following questionnaires:

- (1) Brief demographic questionnaire,
- (2) Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)
- (3) A modified version of Elementary Physical Education Values and Purposes (Xiang, P., S., McBride, R., 2002),
- (4) A questionnaire based on the Attitudes Toward Spanking (ATS) and the Parental Response to Child Misbehavior (PRCM) developed by B. Vittrup and G. Holden (2006).
- (5) Perceptions of Children of Divorce scale that is based on two articles: *The Effects of Divorce on Children* (Foulkes-Jamison, L. 2001) and *Identifying Children's Stress- Response to Divorce* (Pickarm D. 2003).

Data collection will take place at an agreed upon date between February and March 2013. On the day of data collection, Jennifer Carnley, Mallory Grove, Tancy Williams, Kelly Johnson, or Dr. Atilas will explain the purpose of the project to your class, review the information and consent forms, and provide instructions to students regarding the questionnaires. Students will then have approximately 25 minutes to complete the surveys.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would ask that you e-mail the principal investigator at [Julia.atiles@okstate.edu](mailto:Julia.atiles@okstate.edu) if you are willing and able to provide class time and to arrange a mutually agreeable time for the data collection.

Sincerely,

Julia T. Atilas, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

Jennifer Carnley

Mallory Oliver

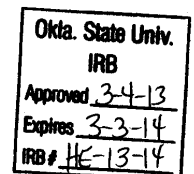
Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 3-4-13
Expires 3-3-14
IRB # HG-13-14

### Participant Information Sheet

- Project Title:** Early childhood education pre-service teachers' beliefs about the use of corporal punishment, the importance of physical activity, and perceptions of children of divorce.
- Investigators:** Dr. Julia Atilas, Jennifer Carnley, and Mallory Oliver
- Purpose:** The purpose of these studies is to generate knowledge that advances teaching and learning by demonstrating the impact of pre-service early childhood teachers' beliefs and values in their teaching practice. We are particularly interested in the impact of values and beliefs regarding opportunities for physical activity, utilization of physical punishment in the schools, and effectively working with children while their families are experiencing the divorce process.
- Procedures:** Participants will be asked to complete survey questionnaire and provide demographic information with an anticipated completion time of *30 minutes*.
- Risks of Participation:** There are *no known risks* associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- Benefits:** We hope to generate research knowledge that advances teaching and learning by demonstrating the impact of contextual experiences on students' dispositions, particularly the disposition of early childhood professionals with regards to incorporating physical activity in the early childhood classrooms, utilizing physical punishment, and meeting the needs of young children experiencing their parents' divorce process.
- Confidentiality:** Confidentiality protections the investigators plan to use include:
- Research records will be stored securely in a locked file of the Principal Investigator and no one other than the research team (Mallory Oliver, Tancy Williams, Kelly Johnson, Jennifer Carnley and Dr Atilas) will have any access to the data obtained.
  - Data files will be destroyed after the completion of the research study;
  - Data reported in any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you.
- There are no foreseeable risks in maintaining confidentiality.
- Compensation:** Compensation will not be offered for this research study.
- Contacts:** *Julia T. Atilas, Ph.D.:* 342 HS, 405-744-4166, [Julia.atilas@okstate.edu](mailto:Julia.atilas@okstate.edu)  
If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact *Dr. Shelia Kennison*, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).
- Participant Rights:** Participation is voluntary and subjects can discontinue the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty. There are no risks to subjects who might withdraw. However, we hope that you will answer all questions as truthfully as you can.

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I have read and fully understand the information sheet. I also understand that all information I provide is strictly confidential and will be used for this research study purpose only. I also understand that I will remain anonymous throughout the course of this research study. I am free to discontinue participation during data collection at any time. **My agreement to participate in this research study is signified by my participation.**



VITA

Mallory Ivie Oliver

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND DISPOSITONS

Major Field: Human Development and Family Science

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2013.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2012.

Experience: Graduate Teacher Assistant- full teaching responsibilities of HDFS 3233- Guidance and Classroom Management in Programs for Young Children Spring 2013  
Graduate Teacher Assistant- Planned lectures, presentations, and graded papers for HDFS 3233- Guidance and Classroom Management in Programs for Young Children Fall 2012  
Substitute Teacher- Perkins-Tryon Public Schools- September 2012- present  
Student Teaching- Second Grade- Perkins-Tryon Elementary School- Spring 2012  
Student Teaching- Pre-Kindergarten- Will Rogers Elementary School