THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COURT MANDATED DIVORCED PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Divorce has increased in the past thirty years in our society (Jacobs, 1986). Estimates of 1 to 1.5 million children are impacted by divorce each year and 40 to 60 percent of children will experience divorce at some time before the age of 18 (Glick, 1989;; Hodges, 1991; Hofferth, 1985; Jacobs, 1986; Kurkowski, Gordon, & Arbuthnot, 1993; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1991; U.S. Census Bureau, 1991). Based upon the divorce numbers alone, more people are affected by divorce today than a generation ago (Jacobs, 1986). It is rare to find a person who has not been touched by divorce either personally or through a friend or relative (Jacobs, 1986).

Impact of Divorce on Families and Children

Many studies have addressed the impact of parents' divorce on children (Glick, 1989; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976; Hodges, 1991; Hofferth, 1985; Jacobs, 1986; Kurkowski, et al., 1993; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 55). Divorce has been well documented in the literature as a stressful situation having a potentially negative impact on children's mental health (Amato & Keith, 1991a; Hetherington, et al., 1976; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 9). Wolchik, Sandler, Braver, & Fogas (1985) found that children, parents and clinicians dealing with family divorce agreed in their rating of the following nine events associated with divorce as most stressful to children (beginning with the event considered most stressful): 1) the child being blamed for the divorce, 2) physical fights between the parents, 3) parental arguments, 4) relatives saying bad things about the child's parents, 5) father telling the child that he does not like the child spending time with the

mother, 6) people in the neighborhood saying bad things about the child's parents, 7) the father saying bad things about the child's mother, 8) the child having to give up pets or other things she or he likes, and 9) the mother acting unhappy. Children identify situations of interparental conflict as among their most stressful life events (Wolchik, et al., 1985).

Those children exposed to long-term, post-divorce interparental conflict experience a greater impact on their development than those children who experienced cooperative coparenting following divorce (Ahrons, 1994, p18; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1985; Jacobson, 1978; Spiegelman, Spiegelman, & Englesson, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989 p, 297; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 156). A parent's anger directed toward the other parent or the child, negative comments about one or both parents, and situations in which the child must "choose between" or "side with" one parent over the other places the child in the midst of the conflicts. "Put downs" of one parent by the other (i.e., when one parent criticizes or belittles the other in front of or to the child), promotion of children "spying" on the other parent (i.e., reporting activities of one parent to the other), and being the "messenger" between parents (i.e., relaying information from one parent to the other) are examples of stresses reported by two-thirds of children of divorced parents (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 156). Unpredictable visitation times, also, increase a child's post-divorce stress (Hodges, 1991; Johnston, Campbell, & Mayes, 1985; Wallerstein, 1989).

Post-divorce interparental conflict and hostility are linked to behavioral and emotional disturbances in children, conversely, less conflict, greater cooperation, and better coparenting between parents predicts better divorce adjustment and fewer problems

among children (Ahrons, 1994, p. 126; Emery, 1982; Hetherington, et al., 1982; Jacobson, 1978; Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; Rutter, 1971; Shaw & Emery, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 157). Children whose parents are in severe conflict show increased incidence of academic problems and conduct difficulties, lower self-concepts, poorer social and psychological adjustment, and problems with the parent-child relationship during times of transition (Amato & Keith, 1991b; Hetherington, et al., 1979; Johnston, Gonzales, & Campbell, 1987; Shaw & Emery, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 35). Wallerstein & Kelly (1980, p. 36) pointed out that parents often exhibit a "diminished capacity to parent" during the divorce process. This has been connected with erosion of the parent-child relationship.

Some aspects of the parent-child relationship are associated with better adjustment following the divorce including consistent discipline; warm, supportive parenting; and a good relationship with at least one parent (Hess & Camera, 1979; Hetherington, et al., 1982; Rutter, 1971; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p.215). Considering the vast impact on children decreasing the conflict between parents post-divorce, increasing awareness of incidents of putting children in the middle, and increasing parents' skills in working with parenting issues (coparenting) would seem to reduce the stress and long-term effects of the divorce on children. Education focusing on the impact of parental actions on their children during this time should be considered a means of reducing the conflict and long-term effects upon this generation of children.

Interventions to Assist Divorcing Families

Interventions have been implemented over the years to address the needs of children of divorce. Over the past thirty years, five intervention areas have gained wide usage: a) child custody evaluation and litigation, b) divorce counseling, c) divorce mediation, d) joint custody, and e) divorced parent education programs. These approaches have demonstrated varying degrees of success and limitations in helping families adjust to the changes of divorce while reducing the adverse effects (Clulow, 1993; Jacobs, 1986; Seltzer, 1994).

Child Custody Evaluation and Litigation. Child custody decisions in divorce usually entail such issues as visitation rights, economic responsibilities for each parent and the primary residence of the child following the divorce (Sorenson & Goldman, 1990). Child custody litigation can be a traumatic and emotionally wrenching experience for families already in upheaval during and following divorce (Arditti, 1992; Wolman & Taylor, 1991). When parents contest custody through the legal process, children can live in emotional and existential limbo for months or years until the issues are resolved (Wolman & Taylor, 1991). The adversarial process in child custody litigation presumes a "win-lose" mentality (Wolman & Taylor, 1991). The child in these situations is faced with a complex set of problems including: (1) involvement in marital issues (usually hostile); (2) parent-child role confusion; (3) powerlessness; (4) cognitive dissonance secondary to parental lobbying from different and competing views of reality; and (5) disillusionment (Arditti, 1992; Wolman & Taylor, 1991). This set of problems is in direct opposition to the idea of cooperative coparenting that is related to better child adjustment to divorce

(Ahrons, 1994, p.73).

Divorce Counseling. Divorce counseling emerged in the 1970s as a sub-specialty of marital therapy due to the increased number of divorces and the apparent need for help in uncoupling (Sprenkle & Storm, 1983). While divorce counseling has proven helpful in the uncoupling process and in reducing the legal litigation following the divorce, it has been ineffective unless both parents are involved (Beilin & Izen, 1991; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 318). Conciliation courts became an arm of the family and civil courts in some states to intervene before the adversarial legal process could exacerbate the problems of uncoupling (Pearson & Thoennes, 1982). These programs began with divorce counseling and later added mediation components (Pearson & Thoennes, 1982).

Divorce Mediation. Mediation became popular in the mid-1970s as an alternative to the adversarial legal model (Bautz & Hill, 1991; Coogler, 1978; Haynes, 1981; Irving, 1995; Ricci, 1980, p. 18). Research has shown that when couples chose to mediate decisions related to their divorce, 77% of couples expressed satisfaction with the final agreement (Pearson & Thoennes, 1985). However, considerably less satisfaction is reported when mediation is court-ordered for divorcing couples (Bautz & Hill, 1989; Pearson & Thoennes, 1985).

Joint Custody. Joint custody burst onto the legal system in the late 1970's (Twiford, 1986). With its rapid adoption by courts, the term caused widespread confusion surrounding the concept and its interpretation (Steinman, Zemmelman, & Knoblauch, 1985). Although providing increased access and involvement of parents with children, joint custody arrangements do not protect children from their emotional reactions to

divorce such as grief and anxiety (Clingempeel & Repucci, 1982; Steinman, et al., 1985; McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1986, 1988).

Divorced Parent Education. Over the past 20 years, a variety of parent education programs have been developed to help parents understand the emotional and behavioral components of divorce and its impact on children and adults. Some divorced parent education programs used in the United States include "Orientation for Divorcing Parents" (Buehler, Betz, Ryan, Legg, & Trotter, 1992), "Kid's Turn" (Bolen, 1993), "Families in Transition" (Brown, Portes, Cambron, Zimmerman, Rickert, & Bissmeyer, 1994), "Children of Separation and Divorce Center" (Frieman, Garon, & Mandell, 1994), "Children First" (Kramer & Wascho, 1993), "Children in the Middle" (Kurkowski, et al., 1993), "Helping Children Succeed After Divorce" (Petersen & Steinman, 1994), and GRASP (Roeder-Esser, 1994). Currently, over one hundred divorced parent education programs are operating in the United States with over 80% being in operation for less than six years (Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLuse', 1996). Goals for these parent education programs are focused in three general areas: 1) parent-focused goals, 2) child-focused goals, and 3) court-focused goals (Geasler & Blaisure, 1995). The basic information and skill concepts presented during most divorced parent education programs include: (a) the grief process and its relationship in divorce to parents and children, (b) games that divorcing families play which cause emotional pain and confusion to family members, (c) effective communication between parents, (d) ways to establish a cooperative, business-based parenting relationship, (e) improving parenting skills, (f) increasing parents' knowledge of child development, (g) alternative dispute resolution techniques and options,

and (h) addressing the emotional and legal issues of cooperative parenting after divorce (Geasler & Blaisure, 1995; Rugel & Sieracki, 1981; Salem, Shepard, & Schlissel, 1996). The programs vary from one to eleven sessions lasting from less than one hour to more than eight hours and occurring with frequencies from weekly to monthly (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). The majority of programs (80%) associated with the courts mandate parent attendance (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). Programs which do not function with court endorsement report just over half (56%) of the programs have mandatory referrals (Braver, et al., 1996).

Effectiveness of Divorced Parent Education Programs

Although the numbers and types of curricula for divorce parent education programs are expanding rapidly, few researchers have explored the efficacy of parent education programs in reducing the impact of divorce on children (Buehler, et al., 1992; Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis, & Hoza, 1998; Kramer & Washo, 1993; Kurkowski, et al., 1993; Rugel & Sieracki, 1981; Zibbell, 1992). Researchers have used three basic methods to assess the effectiveness of divorced parent education programs: 1) consumer satisfaction surveys, 2) pre-post testing research designs, and 3) examination of court records.

The use of consumer satisfaction surveys is the first assessment method. Participants are asked to complete a survey after completing the program about the materials presented and appropriateness of the program. From these surveys, the majority of parents participating in divorced parent education programs believed they had benefitted from the information, had changed their interactions with their children, and

would continue to use the information in the future (Arbuthnot, Segal, Gordon, & Schneider, 1994; Petersen & Steinman, 1994; Young, 1978a, 1978b).

The second method of program evaluation used pre- and post-testing of participants. Some of these studies compared participants responses to those of no-treatment groups (who did not participate in the program) (Buehler, et al., 1992; Kramer, et al., 1998; Kramer & Washo, 1993; Kurkowski, et al., 1993; Rugel & Sieracki, 1981; Zibbell, 1992). In general, these studies found that participants in divorce education programs self-reported learning communication skills and information about divorce (Zibbell, 1992), being more cooperative (Kramer & Washo, 1993), reducing triangulation with their children (Kurkowski, et al., 1993) and experiencing less interparental conflict (Kramer, et al.,1998) compared to no-treatment control groups. In one study, program participants reported improvements in their behaviors and attitudes about parental cooperation following the program compared with those reported before the beginning of the program (Zibbell, 1992). In another study, researchers indirectly assessed parents behaviors by surveying their adolescents' perceptions of change in parent behaviors before and after receiving a written summary of situations where children of divorce feel stressed (Kurkowski, et al., 1993). The adolescents of parents who received the educational information reported fewer triangulation situations with interparental conflict than prior compared to adolescents in the no-treatment (no educational information) group (Kurkowski, et al., 1993). In another study, participants in the court-mandated divorce education program reported higher levels of coparenting over time compared to individuals in the no-treatment control group (Kramer & Washo, 1992).

Recently, Kramer and associates (1998) compared an information based divorce education program with a skills based divorce education program and a no-treatment group for pre-test, post-test, and three month follow-up. Both programs reduced interparental conflict significantly compared to the no-treatment control group. However, the skill-based program significantly improved parental communication compared to the information based program and no-treatment control group. Neither program affected domestic violence, parental conflict, or child behavior problems.

Examination of court records and tracking participants longitudinally are painstaking procedures, but among the few that truly address the court-focused goals of decreasing court involvement post-divorce. Arbuthnot and his associates (1994) followed their program participants' court records for two years after completing the program and compared their relitigation rates with a comparable set of parents who did not complete the program during the same time period. Sixty percent of the parents who had not completed the program returned to court to relitigate within two years, while only 10% of those who completed the program returned to the court system to solve their problems (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994). Although no direct measure can be made of parent or child behavior changes during that time, it is apparent the participants were choosing some option other than relitigation to resolve their problems after attending the program (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994).

However, most parents do not attend these programs unless they are required to do so by the judge hearing their case (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994; Trammel, 1986). Some judges may be reluctant to require parents to attend a parent education program if these

parents are not relitigating custody and visitation issues (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994; Buehler, et al., 1992; Petersen & Steinman, 1994). Until there is more empirical evidence on the effectiveness of parent education programs in reducing interparental conflict, relitigation, and the long-term effects of divorce on children and parent-child relationships, judges and attorneys may be reluctant to recommend or mandate attendance in these programs. With research to support the effectiveness of divorced parent education programs, more professionals will refer divorcing parents for such services and more parents and children of divorce are likely to benefit from these programs.

In summary, divorce continues to have a major impact upon families and children in this country. The effect of divorce has been well documented in the research literature. Other studies have focused upon the factors associated with the negative consequences of divorce. Several approaches have been attempted in the past thirty years to decrease the detrimental and long term effects on children who are the innocent victims of divorce. Divorced parent education is the latest in the series of interventions attempted to improve post-divorce adjustment for families. Although it may appear this type of intervention would help parents to modify their behaviors before long term damage is done to their children, only a few studies have examined the effectiveness of these programs. This study was an attempt to address some of the questions that were unanswered regarding the effectiveness of divorced parent education programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a divorced parent education program, "Helping Children Cope with Separation and Divorce," which was

developed to reduce interparental conflict, increase cooperative coparenting skills, and enhance parents' knowledge of the impact of parental divorce on children. Since interparental conflict has been identified as a major factor in the impact of divorce on children, parents' higher and lower interparental conflict levels (prior to the program) were also studied for differences in levels of coparenting and parental knowledge of the impact of parental divorce on children over time. In addition to this study, the factor structure of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire, an instrument designed to measure content areas of divorce education programs, was explored.

Significance of the Study

As mentioned previously, few empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of parent education programs for divorcing parents and their families. Because of the growth of programs for divorced parents it is important to determine the effectiveness of these programs and identify which participants are most likely to benefit from participating in them. Most of the research on the impact and adjustment to divorce has been conducted exclusively on white middle class Americans. This study examined interparental conflict, cooperative coparenting, and knowledge of the impact of parental divorce on children (parent knowledge) in the general population.

Limitations of the Study

The participants were court-mandated to attend the divorce education program within a six-week period (45 days) from filing for the divorce. Since the court imposed participation on all divorcing custodial parents within its jurisdiction, it was not possible to track the progress of participants through the assessment period while maintaining a

waiting list control for the same period. Attempts were made to recruit a no-treatment group from a similar demographic area, but a low response rate resulted in two few participants for analysis. A comparable no-treatment group could not be secured for this study. This condition limits the external validity and generalizability of the study beyond the participants to other groups.

Selection bias is a threat to the internal validity and a limitation of this study in that there may have been variation in the motivation of those who chose to participate in this study and those who did not. In addition, of those who originally chose to participate, fewer completed the post-test phase of the study. Loss of subjects over the course of the study could also be a threat to the internal validity of the study.

There is a shortage of psychometrically valid instruments with which to assess the constructs related to divorcing families such as interparental conflict, cooperative parenting relationships, child adjustment to divorce, and triangulation between parents and children. The instruments chosen for this study, although limited in empirically based validity and reliability, were among the best measures available at the time.

Definition of Terms

Interparental conflict: Interparental conflict was the level and intensity of parental conflict during and following divorce. This conflict included verbal arguments and physical conflict between parents, undermining the other parent's authority with the child, belittling the other parent, and appeals for the child to side with one parent over the other. For this study, interparental conflict was measured by a total score on the Porter-O'Leary Scale (POS; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). This instrument provided information on

interparental conflict witnessed by the children and/or related to the children such as how often a child might go to one parent for money or permission to do something after being denied by the other parent and how often a parent displays hostility in front of the child. Higher scores indicated a greater frequency of overt parental conflict while lower scores indicated less frequent occurrences of overt parental conflict. In one analysis participants were divided into higher and lower conflict groups based upon the pre-test POS scores (median splits).

Cooperative coparenting: Cooperative coparenting refers to the level of agreement and child care assistance among the parents of divorcing families (Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1994). Conversely, unsupportive coparenting included any of the following: (a) when one parent subtly, or not so subtly, undermined the other parent's efforts with the child; (b) when one parent interrupted the ongoing interaction of the other parent and child; (c) when one parent was openly critical of the other parent's activity with the child; (d) or when a direct request for help with child care was denied (Gable, et al., 1994). Two subscales of he Coparenting Questionnaire (CQ; Ahrons, 1981) were used to assess the level of cooperative coparenting in this study: 1) the Coparental Communication Subscale and 2) the Content of Coparental Interaction Subscale. The Coparental Communication Subscale assessed the level of support for parenting issues; for example accommodating the other parent's need for schedule changes, being a resource and aid in raising the children, and understanding and supporting the other parent's parenting. The Content of Coparental Interaction Subscale related to the parenting aspects of the interactions between former spouses and included items such as how often the parents

made major decisions together regarding their children's lives and how often the parents discussed their children's school and/or medical problems. Two subscale scores were obtained from the CQ: 1) a Coparental Communication Subscale Score and 2) a Coparental Interaction Subscale-Parenting Score. A high score on the Coparental Communication Subscale indicated higher support and lower conflict in the parenting relationship; conversely, lower scores on the Communication Subscale indicated less support and cooperation and more conflict. Higher scores on the Coparenting Interaction Subscale indicated a higher level of involvement in coparenting of the children; lower scores on the Coparental Interaction Subscale indicated lower levels of coparenting involvement with the children. The Coparenting Index was obtained by totaling the two subscale scores. Higher scores on the Coparenting Index indicated higher levels of communication and interaction on the parenting issues following divorce. Lower scores on the Coparenting Index indicated poorer communication and less supportive interactions regarding the parenting of the children.

Parent Attitudes: Parental attitudes for this study referred to parent perspectives on issues related to divorce and its impact on children: telling children about the divorce, developing a business relationship with the other parent, triangulation issues (children's level of involvement in interparental conflict and the degree to which they carry messages to the other parent), and developmental issues regarding divorce adjustment. Parental attitudes about the divorce process and adjustment related to divorce were measured by the Parent Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ; Frieman, Garon, & Mandell, 1994). Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the information presented in the program; lower

scores indicate stronger disagreement with information presented in the program.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Do divorce education program participants significantly differ on pre- and post-test levels of interparental conflict, coparenting behaviors, and parent attitudes about the effects of divorce on children and families?

2. What are the effects of interparental conflict level (higher versus lower) and time (pre-test versus post-test) on coparenting behaviors and parental attitudes about the effects of divorce on children and families among divorce education participants?

a. Do divorce education participants with higher and lower levels of interparental conflict significantly differ on coparenting behaviors and parent attitudes of divorce and its effects on children and families?

b. Do divorce education participants significantly differ on pre and post-test levels of coparenting behaviors and parent attitudes (knowledge) of divorce and its effects on children and families?

c. Is there an interaction between interparental conflict levels and time on levels of coparenting behaviors or parent attitudes (knowledge) of divorce and its effects on children and families among divorce education program participants?

Research Hypotheses

1. Divorce education program participants' levels of interparental conflict, coparenting, and parent attitudes will significantly differ from pre-testing to post-testing phases of the study.

2. Divorce education program participants' levels of coparenting and parent attitudes will significantly differ by time, by level of interparental conflict (main effects), but not by time and conflict (interaction effects).

Assumptions

1. Participants answered all assessments openly and with equal motivation.

2. Conflict between parents was characterized by angry, hostile, and destructive behavior that was measured by the Porter-O'Leary Scale (Camara & Resnick, 1989).

3. Divorced couples continued to have some conflict following the divorce (Camara & Resnick, 1989).

4. Changes in scores on assessments pre-test and post-test reflected participation in the program and not external factors.

5. The instruments were valid in measuring the variables of interest.

6. Participants in the summer sampling period who were court mandated to complete the divorce parent education program did not significantly differ on demographic variables of interests as parents in the winter sampling period who were court mandated to attend the divorced parent education program.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature that was reviewed for this study demonstrates the need for empirical research that examines the effectiveness of divorce parent education programs. First, the impact of divorce on children and families was explored. Second, the various interventions used to assist divorcing families was addressed. Third, and finally, the research on divorced parent education programs was discussed.

Impact of Divorce on Families and Children

The divorce rate rose dramatically between 1965 and 1979; then after a slight decline between 1979 and 1984 it has leveled off (Hernandez, 1988; Jacobs, 1986). It is estimated that 40 to 60% of children today will experience their parents' divorce and spend time in a single parent home before their custodial parent's remarriage (Glick, 1989; Hodges, 1991; Hofferth, 1985; Jacobs, 1986). These numbers reflect the estimated one to one and a half million children under 18 each year who experience their parent's divorce (Glick, 1989; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1991; U.S. Census Bureau, 1991). Norton (1985) reported 45% of all children born in the early 1980s would experience parental divorce, 35% would experience parental remarriage and 20% would experience a second parental divorce. For African-American children born in 1980, 94% were expected to live in single parent homes at some time before reaching 18 years of age compared with 45% of Caucasian children (Hoffereth, 1985). It is estimated that Caucasian children will spend 31% of their childhood in a single-parent home compared to 59% for African-American

children (Hoffereth, 1985). Since so many children are affected for such a large part of their childhood, the impact of divorce on their lives is important.

Divorce's Impact on Adults. Researchers have found that the way parents coped with divorce determined how the children coped with it to a large degree (Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington, et al., 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 300; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 51). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) reported mothers required about two to three years to adjust to divorce while fathers tended to adjust within about a year. Divorcing parents appeared to have longer lasting difficulties because of the continued interaction with the other parent when children were involved compared with couples with no children who divorced and had no further contact (Lee, Picard, & Blain, 1994).

Parents needed support in efforts geared toward improving parental cooperation during and after the divorce so that a viable family relationship could be established (Hetherington, et al., 1976, 1978, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 30; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 153). Studies showed that children needed both parents in a supportive, continuing and meaningful relationship to reduce the traumatic impact of divorce (Ricci, 1980, p.184; Hetherington, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 210). Ongoing and deeply seated custody/visitation conflicts often resulted in unsuccessful attempts to disconnect emotionally and masked other complex needs or problems associated with the parents (Elkin, 1977; Ricci, 1980, p. 74). Divorce is not an event; it is a process which begins long before the actual decision is made to obtain a legal divorce and continues long after the final papers have been signed (Ahrons, 1980; Ricci, 1974). The adversarial legal system has been based upon a history of finding fault, guilt or a

breech of agreement and then determining damages, penalties or sentences (Elkin, 1982).

Some of the stressors resulting from divorce for adults included economic problems that impact mood disturbance (Berman & Turk, 1981), depression (Pearlin & Johnson, 1977), and social adjustment (Pett & Vaughan-Cole, 1986). One study found income decreases associated with poorer divorce adjustment in men (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986). This was interesting in light of women suffering greater declines in income after divorce than men (Spanier & Castro, 1979; Weitzman, 1985).

Family relationships were a major source of continued strain especially when there was conflict between ex-spouses and children were involved (Berman, 1985). The parent-child relationship after separation was another source of strain with reduced communication effectiveness and a diminished capacity to parent after separation. Parenting capacity was further strained by children who were often anxious, angry and demanding (Hetherington, et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, 211).

Divorce Impact on Children. Longitudinal research has shown it takes most family members two to three years to recover from divorce if it is not compounded by continued disruption, stress and adversity (Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington, et al., 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 297; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 206). The long-term effects of divorce on family members have been tracked over ten years with middle class, white families in California (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 27). Another series of longitudinal studies on divorce were conducted with well educated, middle-class white families in Virginia (Hetherington, 1987, 1988; Hetherington & Anderson, 1987; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1982, 1985). Children in

divorced families experience a greater number of social, academic and psychological adjustment problems when compared with children from intact families (Hetherington, et al., 1982, 1985; Kelly, 1988; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 282; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 206). When using matched groups of middle-class Caucasian preschool children in mother custody homes, these children showed more antisocial, acting out, and impulsive behaviors, more noncompliance and aggression with authority figures and peers, more dependency behaviors, greater anxiety, more depression, more difficulty in peer relationships, and more problem behaviors in school persisting even two years after the divorce than children in homes with both parents (Hetherington, et al., 1982).

Another longitudinal study confirmed these findings with a nationally selected random sample of boys and girls from ages 6 to 11 years (Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, & McLaughlin, 1983; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1984, 1985). Information was collected from parents, children, teachers, and psychologists. Children from divorced homes performed more poorly than children from intact families in two major areas: social-behavioral and academic competence.

Numerous studies have examined the impact of parental divorce on children's scholastic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social competence and relationships with parents (Amato & Keith, 1991). Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989, p. 298) reported long-term effects on children in their study including half of the children experiencing another parental divorce within 10 years; half of the children's parents remained angry at one another; 60% felt rejected by at least one parent; and 25% experienced a severe and lasting drop in their standard of living. They further reported

almost half of the children entered adulthood as worried, underachieving, self-depreciating and angry young men and women. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989, p. 299) further point out that as these children reached adulthood they had difficulty establishing love and intimacy to create families of their own.

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1991) countered that there was no reference group to compare how children were impacted long term in these families. Cherlin and Furstenburg (1991) did recognize families needed help and support managing the crisis through education, hotlines and self-help groups; but believed there was no evidence to say these children would not have had the same problems if they had no divorce with which to cope.

Children's emotional well-being, behavioral disturbance and social adaptation were aspects found most affected by the divorce experience (Krantz, 1988). A review of the literature by Emery (1982) indicated stressors such as parental discord, troubled relationships with one or both parents, and loss of contact with a parent had a more negative impact on children's adjustment. Ongoing parental discord after the divorce was associated with behavioral disturbances in children (Johnston, Gonzales, & Campbell, 1987; Shaw & Emery, 1987). Other researchers have argued that the quality of the parent-child relationship was more important than interparental conflict for predicting child adjustment (Hess & Camara, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 102). Four aspects of the parent-child relationship that were important during the divorce included: (a) involvement of the child in the conflict and use of the child for emotional support; (b) warmth and empathy; (c) modeling and expecting ego control; and (d) a rejecting or

distancing relationship (Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989).

A meta analysis by Amato and Keith (1991b) looked at parental divorce and child well-being and found support for theoretical perspectives emphasizing parental absence and economic disadvantage as negatively impacting child well-being. Parental divorce was also associated with negative outcomes in child adjustment in the areas of academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, and social relations (Amato & Keith, 1991b). Another study found that adults who experienced divorce as children had poorer psychological adjustment, lower socioeconomic attainment and greater marital instability (Amato & Keith, 1991a). The differences in well-being between divorced and non-divorced families were not large due to the great variance present among children from those experiencing a large number of problems, to no problems, to some children improving after the divorce (Amato, 1993).

Trying to determine whether any of the theories that account for child adjustment to divorce are supported by the research, Amato (1993) used a meta-analysis to examine 92 studies of children in single parent divorced families compared with children with intact families. This analysis indicated loss of a parent, economic hardship, parent adjustment, and family conflict were factors associated with child adjustment following divorce (Amato, 1993). Parental variables were considered the greatest predictor in child development and adjustment (Felner, 1987). The most influential predictors, Felner (1987) reported, were interparental conflict, the quality of the parent-child relationship, the degree of instability in the child's daily life, the emotional well-being of the parents, and the level of economic stress in the household where the child lives. Children in high

conflict families have been found to have more difficulties with conduct, psychological adjustment, and self-concept compared with children in low conflict families (Amato, 1993). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found the primary predictors of a decline in child behavior and social development were poor parenting, interparental conflict, feeling torn by loyalties to both parents, reliance on support from friends and community services, stability of the child's environment, and the emotional maturity of the child following the divorce. Ahrons (1994, p. 252) suggested giving children time to adjust and a relationship with both parents would help to minimize the negative impact of divorce on children. Further, she includes developing a cooperative relationship as a limited partnership with the other parent for the sake of the children and accepting that the child's family will expand were also important in reducing the potential for negative effects of divorce on children.

Interparental Conflict. Throughout the research interparental conflict appeared as a primary factor in the adjustment of children to divorce (Ahrons, 1994, p. 136; Garrity & Baris, 1994, p. 19; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 13). The level and intensity of parental conflict including the strategies of verbal attacks, physical violence and avoidance of the other parent were associated with poorer child adjustment (Amato, 1993; Camara & Resnick, 1989; Felner, 1987; Garrity & Baris, 1994, p. 41). High conflict, not necessarily physical conflict, between parents was the single best predictor of poor adjustment in children (Amato, 1993; Garrity & Baris, 1994, p.19). The majority of divorcing couples battled furiously during the first year of the divorce (Ahrons, 1981; Hetherington, et al., 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 156). Half of them experienced

physical violence even when no violence occurred during the marriage (Ahrons, 1994, p. 81; Garrity & Baris, 1994, p. 19; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 8). By the third year, most have disengaged and begun to heal emotionally reducing the conflict (Ahrons, p 78, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 10). Ahrons (1994, p. 56) indicated about half of divorces were characterized by high levels of anger and conflict between the parents. Tschann, Johnston and Wallerstein (1989) found that conflict increased the negative attachment to the ex-spouse and, therefore, interfered with positive adjustment after divorce. They also found that developing new intimate relationships improved adjustment by decreasing the attachment (both positive and negative) to the ex-spouse.

Garrity and Baris (1994, p.21) reported most parental conflict focused on parenting matters such as scheduling, discipline, or arrangements for visits rather than financial concerns. Some of the most common situations in which parental conflicts impacted children involved triangulating the children in loyalty contests, communication difficulties, disagreements about money, information gathering about the ex-spouse's private life and other unresolved parental problems (Kurkowski, et al., 1993). Children considered these triangulation situations being put in the middle. Being in the middle included anything from hearing one parent belittle the other's values to vicious verbal attacks; from threats of violence to actual violence; from implicit appeals for exclusive loyalty to explicit demands that children side openly with one parent (Garrity & Baris, 1994, p. 25). When a child was placed in the position of obedience or alliance to one parent at the displeasure of the other parent, the child was caught in a no-win situation, or double bind, from which there was no escape (Arbuthnot, Segal, Gordon, & Schnieder,

1994). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) reported approximately two-thirds of divorced parents placed children in loyalty demand situations.

Cooperative Coparenting. Camara and Resnick (1989) reported that overall conflict was not predictive of children's social-emotional behavior, but the degree of parental cooperation and the way that the parents resolved conflicts explained a significant amount of the variance in children's adjustment to divorce. Mothers and fathers whose cooperative coparenting provided the opportunity for their children to be loved and nurtured by both parents greatly improved the chances the children would successfully cope with divorce (Garrity & Baris, 1994). When there was a lack of cooperation and an increase in conflict between the parents, children suffered proportionally (Garrity & Baris, 1994, p. 28). Hess and Camara (1979) found that children of divorced parents who had strong, relatively conflict-free relationships with their parent(s) improved in their school work, were less aggressive, and showed less emotional distress than children with poor parent-child relationships.

In summary, it would seem the best way to reduce the negative impact of divorce on families and children would be to find a way to reduce interparental conflict and triangulation with children, improve the parent-child relationship, and develop a cooperative coparenting relationship post-divorce.

Interventions to Assist Divorcing Families

Prior to the 1970s the only issues addressed with regard to divorce were child custody and father absence (Derdeyn, 1976; Hetherington, 1972). Four types of interventions made in the past thirty years have attempted to decrease the impact of

divorce and post-divorce parental conflict on children. These interventions as cited in the literature were child custody evaluation and litigation, divorce counseling, divorce mediation, and parent education programs for divorcing parents. These programs reported varying degrees of success (Beilin & Izen, 1991).

Child Custody Evaluation and Litigation. Until the 1920s, fathers generally held custody of their children following a divorce (Derdeyn, 1976; Einhorn, 1986). By 1926, the "tender years" ruling allowed the natural right of paternal custody to be replaced by superiority of maternal love (Derdeyn, 1976; Einhorn, 1986). By 1960, 90% of contested divorce actions resulted in custody of the child being granted to the mother (Derdeyn, 1976). The myth of maternal love being superior to paternal love continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s when the United States had more divorces than at any time in history (Einhorn, 1986). By the mid 1970s only one percent of American fathers retained custody of their children (Einhorn, 1986). In 1973 Goldstein, Freud and Solnit published *Beyond the Best Interest of the Child*, which was widely read in legal and mental health circles making children's needs much more apparent to judges and attorneys. Soon all states had adopted the "Best Interest of The Child" criteria to custody cases. As parents gained more equal status with regard to custody, legal battles over the issue of which was the more fit parent emerged (Einhorn, 1986).

Child custody in a divorce usually determines such issues as visitation rights, economic responsibilities for each parent and the primary residence of the child following the divorce (Sorenson & Goldman, 1990). Due to the variability in state laws that govern divorce actions, in 1970, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State

Laws adopted the Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act (UMDA; Editors of The Family Law Reporter, 1974). This was consistent with the move toward gender equality in divorce matters (Buehler & Gerard, 1995). The UMDA adopted five criteria for child custody decision making: a) the wishes of the child's parent or parents as to his/her custody; b) the wishes of the child as to his/her custodian; c) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with his/her parent or parents, his/her siblings, and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest; d) the child's adjustment to his or her home, school, and community; and e) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved (Buehler & Gerard, 1995).

On the international level, 30 countries have adopted the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of Child Abduction (Buehler & Gerard, 1995). This movement in family law has accepted the "Best Interest of the Child" Standard for making custody decisions internationally (Buehler & Gerard, 1995; Derdeyn, 1976; Einhorn, 1986). The best interest standard clarified the importance as separate and distinct from the parents' property settlement (Buehler & Gerard, 1995; Derdeyn, 1976; Einhorn, 1986). In some cases, a *guardian ad litem* was appointed to represent the child's interests (Halikas, 1994). With this increase in status of children in the divorce process, the nature and impact of custody disputes have been examined (Beilin & Izen, 1991; Jacobs, 1986; Kitzmann & Emery, 1993; Sorensen & Goldman, 1990; Wolman & Taylor, 1991). Child custody evaluations, while providing a great deal of information to the court, in most cases were expensive and offered very little to reduce the problems for the children (Derdeyn, 1976; Folberg, 1984). Many times cases were litigated from the perspective that one parent

must be "bad" and the other "good." For a parent to gain custody he or she had to prove to the court greater fitness than the other parent (Fischer, 1983; Sorenson & Goldman, 1990; Victor & Winkler, 1976), rather than the court considering what was in the best interest of the child (Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1973; Hodges, 1991; Pringle, 1975). Children in these situations were asked to make choices between parents (i.e., which parent they wanted to live with) or acted as spies by reporting one parent's behaviors to another parent (Sorenson & Goldman, 1990; Hodges, 1991). These situations created loyalty conflicts within the child leading to poorer adjustment (Beilin & Izen, 1991; Wolman & Taylor, 1991).

Divorce Counseling. With increasing divorce rates, more children in homes with divorced parents and rising numbers of custody disputes, scholars began looking at the effects of divorce on the American family and ways to deal with those effects. The landmark study by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) in the mid- 1970s brought into focus the immediate crisis intervention needs. Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) study which became known as the California Children of Divorce Project was established as a Divorce Counseling Service. During the 1970s increased numbers of divorces and the realization that families needed help in uncoupling gave rise to a new subspecialty--divorce therapy (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1980). While marital therapy had the goal of "saving marriages" the goal of divorce therapy was the eventual dissolution of the relationship (Brown, 1976, p.410). Divorce counseling was ineffective unless both parents were involved (Beilin & Izen, 1991; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 318). Usually, during this time, parents were experiencing high levels of conflict. They were not wanting to be

together due to the level of anger (Beilin & Izen, 1991). Many parents, also, interpreted divorce counseling as sending the children for divorce adjustment counseling (Beilin & Izen, 1991). A parent might seek counseling alone to work on their personal divorce issues or to find ways of dealing with problems they were having with the children (Beilin & Izen, 1991). These factors have limited the effectiveness of divorce counseling to reduce the impact upon children.

Divorce Mediation. Also during the mid-1970s the use of mediation emerged as an alternative to the adversarial legal process and claimed to be an advanced model for reducing conflict, improving communication and coparental cooperation, producing better agreements in less time and expense, enhancing psychological adjustment for parents and children and leading to better compliance with agreements (Kelly, 1996). Research has demonstrated higher rates of compliance with mediated agreements compared to those reached through the adversarial process (Bautz & Hill, 1991; Coogler, 1978; Emery, 1994; Haynes, 1981; Irving, 1981; Kelly, 1990; Pearson & Thoennes, 1989; Ricci, 1980, p. 157). In addition, when couples chose to mediate decisions related to their divorce, 77% expressed satisfaction with the final agreement (Pearson & Thoennes, 1985). However, less favorable results have been found when mediation was court-ordered for divorcing couples (Bautz & Hill, 1989; Pearson & Thoennes, 1985). Kelly (1996) reported parents using comprehensive divorce mediation recounted less conflict during the divorce process than those parents using litigation. By the final decree, mediating parents reported less conflict and more cooperation, more child-focused communication, and more non-custodial parent involvement with children than the adversarial sample (Kelly, 1996).

Mediation, however, was not appropriate for all divorcing parents. Highly suspicious or angry people presented a greater challenge to mediation, requiring more time and higher level skills of mediators than were often allowed by many jurisdictions mandating mediation (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Kelly & Gigy, 1989).

Joint Custody. Joint custody was the most common arrangement in mediated divorce settlements (Bautz & Hill, 1991). During the 1980s, joint custody followed mediation as the panacea for solving relitigation problems among divorcing parents. Within five years, joint custody legislation was passed in 32 states and many more states were considering legislation (Johnston, et al., 1989; McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1987; Steinman, Zemmelman, & Knoblauch, 1985). Legislation outlines two types of joint custody: 1) joint legal custody usually referred to parents assuming equal responsibility for major decisions about their children and 2) joint physical custody indicated the children were living for substantial portions of time with each parent (Johnston, et al., 1989). Twiford (1986) distinguished between joint legal custody, joint physical custody, divided custody and split custody. Joint legal custody provided for equal legal authority of both parents in making decisions for the child. Joint physical custody provided for the child to spend time in both parents physical living situation, but legal authority resided with one parent. Divided custody consisted of alternating sole custody between the parents. Split custody dealt with dividing of the siblings between the two parents so each parent was awarded sole custody of one or more children.

Originally, joint custody was expected to resolve the conflict issue over children since parents would share the decision making on parenting issues. However, this has not

been the panacea originally expected (Steinman, et al., 1985). Steinman, et al. (1985) found 27% of joint custody cases successful, 42% of the cases were stressed, and 31% failed. Children had difficulty changing homes, not so much because of adapting to different sets of rules, but because parents sometimes reacted with vigorous resentment especially in contested custody cases (Johnston, et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 261; Wallerstein & McKinnon, 1986). Johnston, et al. (1989) further reported joint custody in contested custody cases resulted in more frequent access to children by both parents following divorce. There was, however, no clear evidence of joint custody being better for the child than any other custody type. There has been no evidence in the research literature that any type of custody arrangement was better for children of high conflict families (Hodges, 1991). Pre-school children in joint custody arrangements were not protected from the grief and anxiety experienced by young children during divorce (Clingempeel & Repucci, 1982; McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1986, 1988; Steinman, et al., 1985). The specifics of these arrangements vary greatly from case to case and jurisdiction to jurisdiction (Johnston, et al., 1989). Although there was great interest initially in joint custody, little counseling has been available to parents to provide guidance in this relatively untested area (McKinnon & Wallerstein, 1988).

Johnston (1995) outlined six principles for custody decisions: 1) warm, affectionate, and responsive parent-child relationships should carry the greatest weight in determining the best residential arrangement after divorce; 2) children were better off in the care of parents who were relatively free of psychological disturbance or substance abuse; 3) arrangements needed to minimize potential ongoing interparental conflict; 4)

with highly conflictual parents an explicit legal parenting contract possibly including a coparenting counselor or arbitrator would be necessary; 5) when neither parent was able to protect the child, substitute care givers (grandparents, child care workers, etc.) counselors, or child advocates would be necessary; and 6) if there was indication of domestic violence, the non-violent parent would have sole custody with the violent parent's access to the child being supervised.

Divorce Parent Education Programs. Newspapers, magazines, and television programs have identified divorced parent education programs as the latest trend for family courts (Salem, Schepard, & Schlissel, 1996). The first court-affiliated parent education programs began in the mid 1970's (James & Roeder-Esser, 1994). Today, the providers of such programs include family court service offices, private and public mental health agencies, independent parent education networks, community-based agencies, educational institutions and others (Salem, et al., 1996). At least 40 states have court associated divorced parent education programs (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996). Recent surveys have identified more than 560 programs in North America (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996; Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLuse', 1996). These programs range from one to eleven sessions on a weekly to monthly cycle with sessions from less than one to more than eight hours in length (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996; Braver, et al., 1996).

Researchers have begun evaluating these varied programs and approaches such as the impact of parent education on mediation (Hatcher, 1994), the impact of video-based programs on post-divorce behavior of parents and children (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1995; Kearnes, Gordon, Kurkowski, & Arbuthnot, 1994), the impact of programs on relitigation

rates (Arbuthnot, Gordon, & Lieber, 1994), and the impact of parent education on behavior change and development of post-divorce parenting skills (Wolchik, et al., 1993). Most recently, a study was conducted to compare the effects of two different programs, one skill-based and the other information based (Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis, & Hoza, 1998).

Goals for these parent education programs were focused in three general areas: 1) parent-focused goals, 2) child-focused goals, and 3) court-focused goals (Geasler & Blaisure, 1995). Parent-focused goals covered issues such as interparental conflict, communication skills, divorce adjustment, coparenting skills and "normalizing" data on the impact of divorce. Child-focused goals included education on the effect of parental conflict on children, keeping children out of the middle, effects of divorce on children, ways to reduce children's problems related to divorce and creating safe environments for children following divorce. The court-focused goals of these programs included reducing complaints to the court, reducing relitigation, resolving custody and visitation issues and helping parents understand the court procedures. Braver (1995) believed short programs (i.e. those which operate for a few hours in a single session) could sensitize parents to the issues and provided motivation for future learning, but behavior change and skill development required more intensive experiences. Solid empirical evidence was needed to determine how effective these programs were in creating long-term behavioral changes. Three approaches have been utilized: 1) consumer satisfaction surveys, 2) pre- and post-testing of participants, and 3) examination of court records.

Effectiveness of Divorce Parent Education Programs

The first evaluation of parent education programs for divorcing parents have utilized consumer satisfaction surveys addressing course content (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994; Petersen & Steinman, 1994; Young, 1978a, 1978b). Although the mandated female participants of a divorce workshop had mixed reactions about attending the program at the outset, by the end of the workshop 91% indicated they would attend the workshop again on their own (Young, 1978). A follow-up study indicated that 61% of those responding reported long-term benefits from the program and 58% anticipated future gains from the workshop (Young, 1978b). In a similar study, 72% of the mandated divorced parent education program participants believed the course should be mandatory for all divorcing parents, 87% felt the course was worthwhile, and 93% felt the course helped them understand how divorce affects children (Arbuthnot, et al., 1994). Petersen and Steinman (1994) found that half to three-fourths of mandated divorced parent education program participants indicated the information helped them understand their own feelings, become more aware of their children's point of view, and interact differently with their children on divorce issues. In summary, it is apparent that the majority of participants indicate these programs are helpful and, although they would not have attended voluntarily, believed it would be beneficial for all divorcing parents to attend.

More recently, more sophisticated research designs have been utilized (Arbuthnot, Gordon, & Lieber, 1994; Buehler, et al., 1992; Kramer, et al., 1998; Kramer & Washo, 1993; Kurkowski, et al., 1993; Rugel & Sieracki, 1981; Zibbell, 1992;). These studies have utilized a pre- and post-test approach evaluating their programs. Two studies

included a 3-month follow-up assessment (Kramer, et al., 1998; Kramer & Washo, 1993).

In the Rugel and Sieracki study (1981), the divorced parent education program was an eight week, three-hour session course. Sessions were divided into didactic and group discussion components to address child development and adjustment to divorce issues. The program was evaluated by differences in the pre- and post-workshop behavior rating scale scores completed by the parents on the target child in the study. Results indicated that participants in the program reported less anxiety in target children compared to the control group (non-participants).

Zibbell (1992) used pre- and post-program questionnaires for his four week, two hour session small-group program which provided education and group discussion. T-test analyses indicated significant changes in attitudes ($p<.01$) about children and parent-child relationships, but behavior change regarding these issues did not reach significance ($p<.10$).

Kurkowski and his associates (1993) used a brief educational intervention to reduce the frequency of children being put in the middle of parental conflict when compared to a control group with no intervention and an intact family control. Educational materials summarizing adolescent responses were mailed to one group of parents of high school students completing the questionnaires about stresses of being put in the middle of intraparental conflict issues. Following the mailing, the adolescents completed the same questionnaires. Results indicated that adolescents in divorced homes perceived more stress from being put in the middle of parent conflicts than those in intact families (Kurkowski, et al., 1993). Secondly, results indicated even this brief intervention

reduced the incidence of adolescents being put in the middle of their parents conflict compared to the control group with no intervention (Kurkowski, et al., 1993)

Buehler and her associates (1992) evaluated the "Orientation to Divorcing Parents" program utilizing standardized measures before participants attended the program and one month following the completion of the program. Participants in this study also completed a consumer satisfaction questionnaire at the end of the program (Buehler, et al., 1992). The participants in this study were all voluntary, although they were encouraged to attend by the judge. The results indicated no significant differences between participants and nonparticipants. One month after the end of the program participants did report use of support for social needs ($p=.005$), a decline in their children's beliefs that the parents would reconcile ($p=.002$), and increased length of visitation among participants while the visitation among non-participants children decreased ($p=.057$).

Kramer and Washo (1993) evaluated participants in a court mandated program (pre-, post- and three month follow-up) while utilizing a control group (pre- and three month follow-up) from a nearby county which did not provide a program. The study provided mixed results. In general, participants regarded the program as helpful, thought it would benefit other divorcing parents, and viewed it as a positive referral source for other educational programs on divorce. There appeared to be greater change for parents who reported higher levels of conflict with the former spouse than for those reporting lower levels of conflict. Follow-up results indicated that participants were less likely to put their children in the middle (making disparaging remarks about the other parent,

exposing children to fights, or blaming the other parent for the divorce).

Kramer and associates (1998) compared a skill-based program, Children in the Middle (CIM), with an information based program, Children First in Divorce (CFD), and a no-treatment group from another state that provided no divorced parent education program. This study compared the three program groups (CIM, CFD, No-treatment), with each parent (mother, father), and repeated for three time periods (pre-program, post-program, 3 month follow-up). The results indicated the skill-based program, CIM, improved parental communication ($p<.01$) and both the skill-based program, CIM, and the information based program, CFD, reduced child exposure to parental conflict ($p<.01$). Neither program had a significant impact on domestic violence, actual parental conflict, or child behavior problems when compared to the no-treatment control.

Another approach to assessing program effectiveness has been the review of court records. Arbuthnot and his associates (1994) examined court records for divorced parents re-litigating issues regarding children. These parents were mandated to attend a 2-hour parent education class. Two years following participation in the class, only 10% of the parents had returned to court. However, a comparable group who did not attend the class had a relitigation rate of 60% during the same period.

Summary

In summary, participants reported significant benefits from divorced parent education programs by indicating the programs were helpful and worthwhile, helped them understand how divorce affects children, and should be mandated for all parents going through divorce. In addition, pre- and post-testing indicated changes that parallel those

reported by participants such as by increasing knowledge about divorce and its impact on families and children, reducing the incidence of putting children in the middle of intraparental conflict, increasing visitation, and increasing the use of support resources. Finally, court records indicated that participants in such programs were less likely to require court intervention to resolve problems compared to control groups.

Given the impact of divorce on children and families, if interventions such as divorced parent education programs appear to have a significant effect on interparental conflict and coparenting skills as well as general information regarding adjustment to divorce, they would be beneficial to children and families. However, only a few studies have explored the effectiveness of such programs. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of a divorced parent education program on parents' level of interparental conflict, coparenting skills and knowledge of divorce and its impact on families and children in general. This study also examined whether participants pre-seminar level of interparental conflict influences the effectiveness of the program. In the next chapter, the methodology for this study will be explained.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The 267 participants who began the study were parents of minor children (under age 18 years) of the current marriage who had filed for divorce and were court mandated to attend the divorce education program in northeastern Oklahoma within 45 days of filing their divorce petitions. All 267 participants attended a four-hour, court-mandated divorced parent education program and completed pre-test assessments. However, one month post-test assessments were completed by only 67 of the original 267 participants. All participants voluntarily participated in the research giving their names and addresses for follow-up contact prior to the beginning of the test. While the pre-test phase was conducted prior to the seminar, the post-test was conducted by mail with a 25% return rate.

The 67 participants completing both sets of measures resided predominately in urban areas (48%; n=32), but suburban (27%; n=18) and rural (25%; n=17) participants were well represented. In terms of age, 37% of participants were in their 20s (n=25), 34% were in their 30s (n=23), and 25% were in their 40s (n=17). Female participants (73%; n=49) outnumbered male participants (27%; n=18) almost three to one. The majority of participants (84%; n=27) had completed high school or its equivalency with a mean of 13.23 years of schooling (SD=1.99). Levels of educational training ranged from ninth grade to graduate school. The participants were predominantly Caucasian (85%; n=57) while other ethnic groups included: Native American (10.4%; n = 7), Hispanic/Latino

(3%; n=2) and Asian American (1.5%; n=1). The income level of the participants ranged from below $10,000 annually (21%; n=14) to over $90,000 annually (3%; n=2), with the median in the $15-20,000 (18%; n=12) range of annual income. The majority of the participants were ending their first (73%, n=49) or second (19%, n=13) marriage, but some were ending their third marriage or more (16%; n=5). On average, participants had been separated for 1-6 months (61%; n=41) although this ranged from less than one month (7.5%; n=5) to over one year (13%; n=9). Most of the child custody was held by mothers either as sole custodian or jointly with mothers having physical custody (65%; n=43), although fathers as sole custodians (16%; n=10) and disputed custody (12%; n=8) were represented. The majority of participants had one (48%, n=32) or two children (40%; n=27) with most children in the household under the age of 18 years (90%; n=60).

Measures

This study attempted to examine parent attitudes (knowledge of divorce and its effects on children and families), coparenting (content and quality), and interparental conflict in parents who attended a court mandated divorced education program. Instruments included a demographic sheet, the Porter-O'Leary Scale (Porter, 1980), the Parent Attitude Questionnaire (Frieman, 1994), and a Coparenting Index consisting of the Quality of Coparenting Subscale and Content of Coparenting Subscales (Coparental Communication and Interaction-Parental) of the Coparenting Questionnaire (Ahrons, 1980). Although it was originally proposed to include the Coparental Interaction Non-Parenting Subscale of the Coparenting Questionnaire, completion of this subscale by participants was inconsistent and did not yield enough participant responses to include this

subscale in the Coparenting Index (CI) for the analyses (pre-test completed n = 28; post-test completed n = 17). The Non-Parenting Subscale of the Coparenting Questionnaire was on the backside of the instrument and some participants failed to respond to those questions.

Demographic Questionnaire. The demographic information questionnaire (See Appendix C.) was used to collect information regarding gender, education, age, ethnicity, income, occupation, number of marriages and length of separation, size of household and custody arrangement. The information gathered was used to describe the sample (See Appendix A, Table 1).

Porter-O'Leary Scale. Interparental conflict was measured using the Porter-O'Leary Scale (POS; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; See Appendix D). The POS is a 10-item questionnaire designed to assess the frequency of overt parental conflict that occurs in the child's presence (Emery, 1982; Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Armistead, 1994; Gryeh, Seid, & Fincham, 1992; Patenaude & Kerig, 1996; Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

Individual items on the POS are rated on a 5-point Likert scale as to frequency of occurrence, from never (1) to very often (5). Total scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher levels of conflict. Items identify issues related to interparental conflict such as arguments, sarcasm and ridicule of one parent by the other, as well as, physical and verbal hostility in front of the child (Porter & O'Leary, 1980). For the purposes of this study, participants were categorized into higher and lower interparental conflict groups based on median splits of pre-test scores (Md=23, M=23.2, SD=7.0) for one of the major analyses.

The POS has demonstrated good internal consistency (alpha = .86) and 2-week test-retest reliability ® = .96; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). For this study, the POS had Cronbach alpha estimates of .81 for pre-test participants (n = 260). Husbands' and wives' scores on the POS have been significantly correlated ® = .54; Gryeh, et al., 1992). Criterion validity has been demonstrated given the relationship between the POS and the Short Marital Adjustment Scale ® = .63; Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

Coparenting Index. Coparenting refers to the continued, cooperative and mutually supportive relationship between divorcing parents who both continue to participate in child rearing (Ahrons, 1981). For this study, the coparenting relationship was measured using the Quality of Coparental Communication and Content of Coparental Interaction Subscales of the Coparenting Scale (Ahrons, 1981; See Appendix D). The Content of Coparental Interaction Subscale is a 10 item subscale that focuses on child-rearing issues of coparenting such as sharing decision making regarding the children and discussing the children's interests, needs and accomplishments with the other parent (Ahrons, 1981). The items are scored on a 5-point scale with options ranging from *always* (1) to *never* (5). Five items are reverse scored so, overall, higher scores indicate greater parental involvement in child-rearing issues, interpreted as better coparenting, while lower scores indicate less involvement in child rearing issues, interpreted as poorer coparenting. The Quality of Coparental Communication Subscale included a conflict subscale and a support subscale. The conflict subscale addressed parental arguments, anger, stress and differences of opinion regarding parenting. The support subscale addressed shared responsibilities in parenting, accommodating each other's need for change in plans and

being resources to one another regarding parenting issues. High quality coparental relationships have been identified as containing low interparental conflict and high mutual support. Higher scores on this subscale indicate better communication and less disagreement while lower scores on the subscale indicate poorer communication and greater frequency of disagreement. The coparental conflict portion of the subscale consists of 4-items scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *always* to (5) *never*. Scoring was reversed for these items so that higher scores indicated a lower level of interparental conflict. The Quality of Coparental Communication support component of the coparenting subscale included 6-items scored on the same 5-point scale. The Coparenting Index was the sum of these two subscale scores. Scores for this index ranged from 20 to 100. Higher scores on the Coparenting Index indicated lower interparental conflict, higher support, and higher levels of coparental interaction.

The Content of Coparental Interaction Subscale was internally consistent, with reported Cronbach alpha estimates of .94 for women and .95 for men (Ahrons, 1981). For this study the Cronbach alpha estimate for the Content of Coparental Interaction Subscale was .93 for pre-test participants (n = 259). The Quality of Coparental Communication conflict subscale has strong internal consistency, with reported Cronbach alpha estimates of .85 for women and .85 for men (Ahrons, 1981). In this study the Cronbach alpha estimates were .78 for the Quality of Coparental Communication Subscale with pre-test participants (n = 252). The internal consistency for the Quality of Coparental Communication support scale was somewhat lower than the previous subscales, however, reported Cronbach alpha estimates were .83 for men and .71 for

women (Ahrons, 1981). The scores from the support component and the reverse scored items from the conflict component are added to find the Quality of Coparental Communication Subscale score. The Quality of Coparental Communication subscale as a whole was internally consistent with reported Cronbach alpha estimates of .86 for women and .86 for men (Ahrons, 1981). The internal consistency for the Coparenting Index was .92 for pre-test participants (n = 247).

Ahron's (1981) reported internal consistency estimates (ranging from .86-.95). Test-retest reliability estimates were not available on the Coparenting Questionnaire. Although the subscales used are supported by the literature, there are no reported content or construct validity information available for the instrument.

Criterion-related validity of the Coparenting Questionnaire has been established given the significant correlation between clinician ratings of parents' coparenting behavior during interviews and the parents' Coparenting Questionnaire scores ($r=.43$ for men; $r=.58$ for women; $p<.001$; Ahrons, 1981).

Parent Attitude Questionnaire. The Parent Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ; See Appendix D) is a 25-item survey used to survey parents' knowledge regarding basic divorce and child adjustment issues such as the impact of divorce on children and adults, the development of cooperation in raising children, the prevention of child involvement in parental issues, and the knowledge of developmental needs of children following divorce (Frieman, Garon, & Mandell, 1994). For example, major content issues presented during divorce parent education classes include benefits of parental cooperation, costs of parental conflict, impact of divorce on children, developmental needs of children during and

following divorce, the effects of negative comments about the other parent on the child, conflict management skills, parenting skills, post-divorce reactions of parents, benefits of supportive coparenting, community resource information, dispute resolution options, custody options, other economic and legal issues related to divorce (Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLuse', 1996).

Although the PAQ has been used in research on a divorce education program, there has been no information available on its psychometric properties. The internal consistency of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire was analyzed using the pre-test responses of all initial participants (n=267) in this study. The Cronbach alpha for the Parent Attitude Questionnaire was .71.

The Parent Attitude Questionnaire served as a measure of changes in parent attitudes about topical information from the program. Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*. The number of points for each item were added to obtain the total PAQ score. Total scores on the PAQ could range from 25 to 175.

The Parent Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ) has good face validity given that the items represent the topics covered in divorced parent training programs. The PAQ appears to have construct validity based upon divorce research regarding family stressors, the factors supporting healthy divorce adjustment, and the content of divorced parent education programs (Ahrons, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 298). Since there are no other instruments examining these issues, it is very difficult to establish criterion validity except through comparison to theory.

Given the recent development and use of this instrument and the lack of psychometric information on the PAQ, the factor structure was examined by conducting a principle components factor analysis with oblimin rotation on the 25 item PAQ using the 256 completed pre-test questionnaires. Based upon the Kaiser rule (retain factors with eigenvalues greater than one) and a scree plot (Stevens, 1996), six factors emerged, which accounted for fifty-six percent of the common variance. For purposes of this study, loadings used in the interpretation were determined by "testing each loading for significance at alpha = .01 (two-tailed test)" as suggested by Stephens (1996, p. 371). An absolute value of .40 was utilized in this study, so all loadings equal to or greater than this absolute value were used for interpretation of these factors. When items loaded with an absolute value of .40 on more than one factor, an item was only included on the factor based on its heaviest loading with the factors. See Table 2 (Appendix A) for a list of the six factors and the items with their loadings on each.

Factor 1 ("Divorce Knowledge and Coping") had an eigenvalue of 5.86 and accounted for 23.4 % of the common variance. Nine items loaded above the absolute value (0.40), and these items related to the knowledge of children's adjustment and needs during divorce and the impact upon adults. The Cronbach alpha estimate for the Divorce Knowledge and Coping Factor was .87 for pre-test participants in this study (n = 260).

Factor 2 ("Divorce Adjustment") had an eigenvalue of 2.19 and accounted for 8.7% of the common variance. Two items loaded on this factor and addressed issues such as feeling ready to deal with the divorce and a sense of being better of divorced than married to the ex-spouse. Internal consistency estimate for the Divorce Adjustment

Factor was .74 for pre-test participants (n = 262) of this study.

Factor 3 ("Triangulation") had an eigenvalue of 1.97 and accounted for 7.9% of the common variance. Four items loaded on this factor and related to parent attitudes about putting children in the middle of parent disagreement and making negative comments about the other parent. The Cronbach alpha estimate of internal consistency for the Triangulation Factor was .69 for pre-test participants (n = 262) of this study.

Factor 4 ("Stress") had an eigenvalue of 1.51 and accounted for 6.1% of the common variance. Four items loaded on this factor and related to issues of fear, worry, lack of energy, and children's needs of help. The Cronbach alpha estimate was .55 for the pre-test participants (n = 262) of this study.

Factor 5 ("Anger Expression") had an eigenvalue of 1.28 and accounted for 5.1% of the common variance. Only one item loaded on this factor and it addressed separating anger at the ex-spouse from anger at the children.

Factor 6 ("Coparenting") had an eigenvalue of 1.25 and accounted for 5% of the common variance. Three items loaded on this factor dealing with issues of developing a business relationship with the ex-spouse, obtaining child support, and the children needing to be with both parents. The Cronbach alpha estimate was .51 for pre-test participants (n = 263) of this study.

Correlational analyses were conducted for the PAQ factors (See Appendix A_3, Table 3).

The means and standard deviations of all dependent variables in this study are listed in Table 4 (See Appendix A.). Further correlational analyses were conducted with

the total scores of the POS, PAQ and CI and the six Factor Scores of the PAQ (See Appendix A_5, Table 5). Conflict (POS total score) was significantly correlated with Stress, PAQ Factor 4 ($r = .322$, $p<.01$) and with Anger Expression, PAQ Factor 5, ($r = -.372$, $p<.01$). Stress was directly correlated and Anger Expression was inversely correlated with interparental conflict. Coparenting (PAQ Factor 6) was significantly correlated with the Coparenting Index ($r = .42$, $p < .01$; See Appendix A_5, Table 5) which supports the construct validity for the PAQ Coparenting Factor.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from those attending the "Helping Children Cope with Separation and Divorce Seminar." Attendance of this seminar was mandatory for parents with minor children of that marriage filing for divorce in a nine county area of northeastern Oklahoma. Participants were recruited at the time they checked in for the seminar. A table was placed next to the registration table with a sign indicating it was a "Divorce Research Study" with the investigator's name and school. When seminar participants stopped to ask about the study, they were told it was a dissertation research study on divorce. If they were interested in participating, they wrote their names and addresses next to an identification number on a code sheet and then were given the assessment packet with the same number. Participants were asked to complete the assessments prior to beginning of the seminar. The packets included the first cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the research project, an Informed Consent Form (Appendix E), the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix C), the Porter-O'Leary Scale (Appendix D_1; 1980), the Helping Children of Separation and Divorce Seminar Evaluation (Parent

Attitude Questionnaire, PAQ; Appendix D_2; Frieman, et al., 1994), the Coparenting Questionnaire (Appendix D_3; Ahrons, 1981), and a postage paid return envelope. The first cover letter (Appendix B_1) explained the purpose of the study, the benefits and risks of participation, and the requirements to participate. Those who agreed to participate indicated their agreement by signing and returning the informed consent with their completed assessments. The packets were collected during the introductory remarks and prior to the presentation of the content of the seminar.

Identification numbers were assigned to the participants and used as a tracking mechanism to determine names and addresses for the post-test mailings. This code sheet, which includes identification numbers and names and addresses of participants, was kept separate from the data files. The names and addresses were used for the second mailing and for awarding gift certificates following the drawings.

An informed consent form was included in the first packet of materials. When the materials were returned, the informed consent was immediately separated from the other materials and stored in a separate file from the instruments with identification numbers. In addition, identification numbers of participants were entered into a drawing for a $50 gift certificate at the conclusion of the pre-test sampling.

One month after attending the program, a second packet of materials was mailed to those who participated in the pre-testing phase of this study. This packet included the second cover letter (Appendix B_2) describing again the purpose of the research project and the benefits and risks of participation, the Porter-O'Leary Scale (See Appendix D_1), the Coparenting Questionnaire Subscales (See Appendix D_3), the Parent Attitude

Questionnaire (See Appendix D_2), and a postage paid return envelope. The identification numbers of those returning completed assessments were entered into a drawing for a second $50 gift certificate at the conclusion of the post-test phase of the study.

Attempts were made to recruit a no-treatment comparison group of similar parents from the court records of a similar geographic location in other areas in Oklahoma that did not have a court-mandated divorce parent education program. Over 325 parents who had petitioned the courts for divorce and were not mandated to attend a divorce education program were mailed a packet of materials identical to those given to parents attending the court-mandated divorced parent education program. Because of the time frame of the pre-test and post-test phases with the treatment participants a follow-up mailing to try to increase participation was not possible. During the proposal, it was decided that follow-up phone contact might be interpreted as pressuring parents to participate. At the conclusion of the initial data collection period during the summer, the sample size of the no-treatment group was determined to be too small (post-test n = 10) for data analyses. At that time a second data collection period was undertaken during the winter to increase the numbers of participants. After the winter collection, the total no-treatment sample was still too small (total post-test n = 12) for data analyses and was omitted from the design. Therefore, the focus of this study was on the divorce parent education program participants.

Design of the Study

A repeated measures MANOVA analysis was conducted with the Porter-O'Leary Scale, Parent Attitude Questionnaire and Coparenting Index scores as dependent

variables. In addition, a split plot 2 (Higher versus Lower interparental conflict) X 2 (time, pre-test versus one month post-test) repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) design was performed with the Parent Attitude Questionnaire and Coparenting Index scores as dependent variables. Participants were classified into Higher and Lower interparental conflict groups using median splits (Md=23) of the pre-test POS score. Participants with a pre-test score of 24 and higher were in the Higher conflict group; participants with a pre-test score of 23 and lower were in the Lower conflict group. A principle components factor analysis with oblimin rotation was conducted to identify the factor structure of the PAQ. The factors were then used for 2 X 2 (Time versus Conflict) split plot MANOVA to better explain the results of the previous 2 X 2 MANOVA design. The relationships among the dependent variables were obtained using correlational analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a court-mandated divorced parent education program on levels of interparental conflict, cooperative coparenting, and knowledge the impact of divorce on children and families (parent attitudes). Effectiveness of the program was assessed by comparing the participant's responses on measures of interparental conflict, coparenting, and parent attitudes before participating in the seminar (pre-test) and one month following the seminar (post-test). In addition, this study examined the impact of interparental conflict level (higher versus lower) and time (pre and post) on the levels of cooperative coparenting and knowledge of divorce and its impact on children. The factor structure of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire was examined and factors were utilized in further analysis of the analyses by time and level of interparental conflict.

Statistical Analyses:

Procedural Question: The design of the study had included a treatment and no-treatment control group. The treatment group was comprised of participants who filed for divorce and attended a court mandated divorced parent education program; the no-treatment group was proposed to comprise participants who filed for divorce and lived in counties with no court mandated divorced parent education programs. Parents in the no-treatment group were contacted by mail after obtaining their names and addresses from the court records. The initial data collection of the no-treatment group resulted in a poor

response (n=325 mailed; n=22 returned; 6.8%). A second data collection period was added during the winter (no-treatment: n=199 mailed; n=5 returned; 2.9%). The total of both data collections still resulted in an insufficient number of no-treatment participants (pre-test n=27; post-test n=12) to analyze the data. Therefore, data analyses using the no-treatment group were not conducted.

Before pooling the treatment group data from both collection periods, the demographic variables of the summer participants (pre-test n=202; post-test n=46; 23% completion) were compared with those of the winter participants (pre-test n=65; post-test n=21; 32% completion) to see if there were significant differences between these groups of participants on key demographic characteristics. Categorical demographic variables (living situation, gender, race, custody arrangement, season of sampling) were compared by χ^2 analyses and continuous demographic variables (age, education, income, number of marriages, and length of separation) were compared using independent t-test analyses. It was concluded that demographic characteristics of the two samples were similar enough to combine into a pooled data group. The summer and winter samples only differed significantly on income level ($t=4.70$, $p<.01$; See Appendix $A_{6,7}$, Tables 6 and 7).

Due to the large attrition rate in the treatment group from the pre-test (n=267) to the post-test phase (n=67; 25% completion), the demographic characteristics of the participants who only completed pre-test materials were compared to the demographic characteristics of those participants who completed both parts of the data collection (n=67). Participants who completed the pre-testing and post-testing phases significantly differed from the participants who completed only the pre-testing phase on: 1) length of

separation, 2) number of children under 18 years, and 3) area of residence. Participants who completed both sets of instruments had been separated for a shorter length of time ($t(1,262) = -2.18$, $p = .03$), had fewer children under the age of 18 ($t(1,264) = -2.01$, $p = .046$; See Appendix A_8, Table 8), and tended to live in urban areas ($\chi^2(1) = 4.51$, $p = .03$, See Appendix A_9, Table 9) than those participants who only completed the pre-test assessments. Only 17% of the pre-test only participants were male ($\chi^2(1) = 6.57$, $p = .01$; Appendix A_9, Table 9) whereas men comprised 33% of the completed sample.

When exploring potential gender differences on demographic characteristics, the only significant finding was that women, on average, tended to have custody ($\chi^2(1) = 10.37$, $p = .001$) more often than men participating in the program (See Appendix $A_{10,11}$, Tables 10 and 11). See Table 1 (Appendix A_1) for a summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample (n=67).

Research Question 1. Do divorce education program participants significantly differ on pre- and post-test levels of interparental conflict, coparenting behaviors, and parent attitudes about divorce and its effects on children and families?

To answer this research question a one-way MANOVA (time: pre-test vs. post-test) was conducted using interparental conflict (Porter-O'Leary Scale total score), Parent Attitudes (Parent Attitude Questionnaire total score), and coparenting behaviors (Sum of the Quality of Coparenting Communication Subscale and Content of Coparenting Communication Subscale scores) as the dependent variables (See Appendix A_{12}, Table 12). There were no significant main effects nor interaction effects for this one-way MANOVA procedure (See Appendix A_{12}, Table 12). Therefore, participants did not

differ in their pre-test and post-test levels of interparental conflict, parent attitudes, or coparenting behaviors when considered all together.

Correlational analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among the dependent variables (pre-test and post-test scores were included). Pre-test measures correlated significantly with their post-test equivalents. The pre-test Coparenting Index scores correlated negatively with the post-test Coparenting Index scores. In addition, parent attitudes correlated significantly with the Coparenting Index (pre-test). See Table 13, Appendix A_{13}) to review the correlational matrix for these dependent variables.

Research Question 2. What are the effects of interparental conflict level (higher versus lower) and time (pre-test versus post-test) on coparenting behaviors and parental attitudes about divorce and its effects on children and families among divorce education participants?

To answer this research question, a split plot repeated measures 2 (Conflict) X 2 (Time) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted using parent attitudes score and the coparenting behaviors score as dependent variables to answer this question. Participants were classified into higher and lower levels of interparental conflict based upon the median split of the pre-test Porter-O'Leary Scale Score. Participants with a POS pre-test score of 24 or higher were classified as having higher interparental conflict, and participants with a POS pre-test score of 23 or lower were classified as having lower interparental conflict. The two time periods were pre-test and one month post-test.

Results of this split plot 2 (conflict) X 2 (Time) MANOVA revealed a main effect for conflict level, $F(1,2)=3.35$; $p=.04$; See Appendix $A_{14,15}$, Table 14 and 15). There was

no significant main effect for time, F(1,2)=1.51, p=.23, and no significant interaction effect, F(1,2)=1.10, p=.34 (See Appendix A_{15}, Table 15). Univariate analysis (within group contrasts) indicated no significant changes for either parental attitudes (PAQ: F (1,2) = 3.07, p = .09) or coparenting behaviors (CI: F(1,2) = .004, p = .95) alone over time nor any interaction effects on parental attitudes (F(1,2) = .288, p = .59) or coparenting behaviors (F(1,2) = 1.84, p = .18; See Appendix A_{16}, Table 16).

Thus, when considering parent attitudes and coparenting together as dependent variables, participants' levels of interparental conflict were inversely related to their parental attitudes (PAQ) and coparenting relationships (CI) regardless of time that cannot be explained by either parental attitudes (PAQ) or coparenting relationships (CI) alone.

A one way MANOVA (pre-test versus post-test) was conducted using the six factors of the PAQ as dependent variables. Means and standard deviations for the six factors are listed in Table 17 (See Appendix A_{17}). The result of the one way MANOVA analyses indicated a significant effect for time (F(1,6) = 2.51; p = .03) when considering the six factors together. These results indicated that participants learned more about knowledge of divorce and its effects on children over time (one month following the seminar). Univariate contrasts of the six factors indicated significant effects for Knowledge of Divorce and Coping Issues (Factor 1; F (1,1) = 9.85; p = .003) and Triangulation (Factor 3; F (1,1) = 4.60; p = .04; Appendix A_{18}, Table 18). Therefore, participants gained significantly more knowledge about divorce and its effects on families and children as well as triangulation issues within one month following the seminar.

A split plot 2 (conflict: higher versus lower) X 2 (time: pre-test versus post-test)

MANOVA was conducted with the six factors as the dependent variables. The result of the MANOVA analysis indicated a significant effect for time ($F(1,6) = 2.60$, $p = .03$) and for conflict ($F(1,6) = 2.80$, $p = .02$), but no significant interaction effects ($F(1,6) = .44$; $p = .85$; Appendix A, Table 18). When the six factors were considered together as dependent variables, time and level of conflict had a significant effect on aspects of knowledge about divorce and its impact on children. In particular, participants' knowledge of divorce and its impact on adults and children's adjustment improved from pre- to post-testing. In addition, participants with higher levels of interparental conflict reported lower levels of parent attitudes (knowledge) compared to participants with lower levels of interparental conflict. Post hoc univariate analysis (within groups contrasts) indicated significant mean differences for Knowledge of Divorce and Coping (Factor 1; $F(1,1) = 9.72$, $p=.003$) and Triangulation (Factor 3; $F(1,1) = 5.29$, $p = .03$; See Appendix A_{19}) over time. The means and standard deviations of the pre and post-test factors are summarized in Table 20 (See Appendix A). Post hoc univariate analyses for higher and lower conflict groups (between subjects) indicated significant mean differences on factors of Triangulation ($F(1,1) = 8.29$, $p = .005$) and Anger Expression ($F(1,1) = 9.07$, $p = .004$). Participants with lower levels of interparental conflict reported significantly higher levels of Triangulation and Anger Expression compared to participants with higher levels of interparental conflict.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a court mandated divorced parent education program on levels of interparental conflict, cooperative coparenting, and parent attitudes regarding divorce and its impact on children and families. In addition, this study explored the effects of interparental conflict level (higher versus lower) and time (pre-test versus post-test) on levels of cooperative parenting and parental attitudes about of divorce and its impact on children and families. Finally, the factor structure of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire was explored and utilized to further explain the impact of the seminar on specific parental attitude factors (e.g. participants knowledge of divorce and its impact divorce adjustment, triangulation, stress, anger expression, and coparenting).

Overall, participants in the divorce parent education seminar did not report significant changes in their levels of interparental conflict, coparenting, and parent attitudes (divorce knowledge) within one month following the seminar. However, regardless of time, participants' interparental conflict levels were inversely related to their parent attitudes (knowledge of divorce) and coparenting relationships when considered together. Participants with higher and lower levels of interparental conflict did not significantly differ on parent attitudes or coparenting relationships when examined separately. These findings are similar to the those of Kramer and Washo (1993), who reported that participants with higher levels of interparental conflict made greater changes in a one month time period than participants with lower levels of interparental conflict.

Correlation analyses of the dependent variables (POS, PAQ, and CI) resulted in a

significant positive relationship between pre-test and post-test interparental conflict and pre-test and post-test parental attitude scores. The pre-test Coparenting Index was significantly and inversely correlated with the post-test Coparenting Index and was significantly and positively correlated with the post-test parent attitude scores. The correlation with the PAQ made sense given the Coparenting Factor of the PAQ and that it would be expected to increase after the seminar. However, the negative correlation with the pre-test and post-test of the Coparenting Index was unexpected. One possible explanation for this could be that the divorcing parents may have less direct contact with one another, causing the coparenting relationship to decline slightly. Further correlational analyses between the individual items of the coparenting index and parent attitude scales would be needed to better understand the significant inverse relationship between coparenting and parent attitudes. The factor analysis of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire was utilized to identify groupings of items that may further explain changes in divorce knowledge and behaviors within one month following the divorce education seminar. These factors related closely to the key concepts in the research literature associated with divorce adjustment and its impact on families and children. The six factors of the PAQ identified in the factor analysis were Knowledge of Divorce and Coping (Factor 1), Divorce Adjustment (Factor 2), Triangulation (Factor 3), Stress (Factor 4), Anger Expression (Factor 5), and Coparenting (Factor 6). These factors were similar to the key areas for adjustment identified in the divorce literature including interparental conflict, divorce adjustment, coparenting, and putting children in the middle (triangulation issues). These areas have been reported as significant to healthy adjustment following divorce

(Amato, 1993; Felner, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 209).

The PAQ factor scores were used in a one way MANOVA over time (pre-test versus post-test). The factors when considered together indicated that participants differed significantly from pre-test to post-test. Post hoc univariate analyses indicated the participants differed significantly on Knowledge of Divorce and Coping (Factor 1) and Triangulation (Factor 3). Thus, over time (from pre-test to post-test), participants increased their knowledge of divorce and coping strategies and their awareness of triangulation situations between parents and children.

When the PAQ factor scores were considered as the dependent variables in a 2 (conflict) X 2 (time) MANOVA, results indicated that participants with higher and lower levels of conflict significantly differed on the six factors when considered together and on Knowledge of Divorce and Coping (Factor 1) and Triangulation (Factor 3) when considered separately. Examination of the individual factors indicated that knowledge of divorce and coping, and awareness of triangulation issues between parents and children increased significantly over time for all participants (regardless of conflict level). The results of this study were consistent with findings reported from other studies showing increased knowledge of divorce and reduced triangulation between parents and children (Arbuthnot, et al., 1998; Washo & Kramer, 1993) where additional changes emerged over the 3 month time frame. These studies completed their post-seminar assessment phase immediately following the program rather than the one-month post-test phase of this study.. Apparently, the one month time fame in this study allowed for some improvement on specific content domains of divorce knowledge, but not as many, or as great of

improvements as studies with longer time frames. Many times, especially when angry as in divorce situations, people are not ready to change when initially presented with information. The presentation of the information, however, can intensify awareness and knowledge so that recognition of situations and behavioral changes can occur over time.

The correlation of the PAQ factors with the other measures in this study were consistent with the content of the other measures. Levels of interparental conflict as measured by the POS were positively correlated with Stress (Factor 4) and inversely correlated with appropriate Anger Expression (Factor 5). This indicates that lower levels of stress and more appropriate anger expression were correlated with lower levels of interparental conflict; Higher levels of stress and less appropriate anger expression were correlated with higher levels of interparental conflict. The Coparenting Index was significantly correlated with the Coparenting Factor (Factor 6) that indicated increased coparenting communication was identified by both measures. This would be expected if they were measuring similar constructs and lends some construct validity to the PAQ.

The total PAQ score correlated significantly with five of the six PAQ factors. Only Stress (Factor 4) did not significantly correlate with the PAQ total score. This evidence represents encouraging support for the use of the PAQ as a valid instrument to assess several factors related to divorce parent education knowledge.

Implications for Further Research

Although divorce parent education programs are popular, more research is needed to support their efficacy as an intervention strategy for divorcing families. Researchers need to develop and use psychometrically sound instruments to monitor the effectiveness

of the divorce education programs. The factor structure of the PAQ holds promise for further research on possible content domains of knowledge in divorce education programs. Additionally, item analyses of instruments may provide insights into the changes that occurred over time, such as the decrease in coparenting scores for lower level interparental conflict. It would also help to clarify what aspects of the divorce education program impact immediate changes and which aspects may require longer integration.

Qualitative studies that cover longer periods of time and include interviews with participants about the seminar could provide rich information that has not been available in quantitative studies with currently available measures. Studies that allow for the examination of the views of presenters, attorneys and judges, as well as participants, about the impact of the program and identify differences in those in areas where there are no programs would provide third party verification of program impact.

Studies that provide opportunities to gather information directly from and about children could also add a dimension to this research area and would provide another source to determine the effectiveness of divorced education programs. This type of research could include information about child behavior changes based on parents' and teachers' self-report, researcher or independent observations, and, depending upon the ages of the children, could include information from the children as well. This would provide more direct information about actual changes in child adjustment to divorce. It is evident that there are numerous avenues for additional research on divorce parent education programs.

Ideally, further efficacy research on divorce education programs need to include comparison groups, for example a waiting list control or no-treatment groups. Although it was difficult to engage the participation of divorcing parents who were contacted by mail, there may be other ways to recruit no-treatment control participants. For example, participation in the post-test phase of the study may have been improved if another face to face opportunity or telephone survey for the information had been implemented for parents who attended the seminar rather than a post-test mailing. Although responding to the assessments may be a great need for the researchers in this field, they may not be important to the participants. In addition, the process of divorce can be a very emotionally painful period in a person's life and to answer questions about those painful events can be even more distressing. Demands on time and energy for custodial parents may have decreased their return rate on the measures. It should also be noted that non-custodial parents may have been less motivated to complete the questionnaires or hesitant to report perceived negative responses. These factors may have impacted the response of post-test participants and, therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution and their generalizability may be questionable.

Close examination of the responses made by each group indicate that women who participated in the program tended to have more sole or joint custody than men participating in the seminar. Since the court requires the custodial parent to attend the seminar more stringently than the non-custodial parent, it is understandable why this sample contains more women than men. Because coparenting requires cooperation of both parents, it would be better if both parents were required to attend.

Studies on divorce education programs can provide a great deal of information about whether or not these types of programs are beneficial over the long term compared to no educational intervention. If funding was available to pay participants in the treatment and no-treatment groups, the attrition rates for this survey research might have decreased.

Another area of possible research would add a qualitative component to quantitative efficacy studies on divorce education programs for parents who file for divorce. For example, adding program evaluation surveys with open ended questions at the end of the program and/or interviewing participants following the program would identify meaningful knowledge gained from these programs.

A research study that compares of different types of programs would help to clarify the best educational format for parents. Is a one time, four hour presentation as effective as a series of presentations over time? Parents may be able to absorb only a portion of the information during a one-time presentation. Follow-up meetings allow for questions to be addressed as they thought about the material over the previous week. This would help parents to clarify misperceptions and to assimilate the information. Court mandated participants are usually angry about being required to participate in a program (at least initially). If anger management information and establishing a non-blaming, educational format for the presentation occurred in the first session participants may be more open in later sessions for more confrontational material.

Implications for Practice

The fact that this study deals with applied research lends itself to practical

application. First of all, it appears, in the short term, the divorce parent education programs, "Helping Children Cope With Separation and Divorce," was beneficial in increasing divorcing parents' knowledge of divorce and coping issues and reducing triangulation between parents and children. Since parents with higher and lower levels of interparental conflict reported significantly different levels of Knowledge of Divorce and Coping and Triangulation following the divorce education program, it may be beneficial to have different programs developed to address the unique educational needs of each group. As Arbuthnot and associates (1998) found in their comparison of an information based program and a skills based program, parents with higher conflict levels benefitted from skills training in communication skills while parents from lower conflict groups benefitted about the same from both programs. Determining the appropriate training program for an individual could be achieved by a pre-registration assessment of interparental conflict prior to assignment of parents to classes. Those divorcing parents with higher levels of conflict might be assigned to a skills based class with additional information on communication, conflict resolution, and appropriate anger expression. This class may require more than one session. The lower conflict parents may be able to gain as much from an information-based program. A cooperative arrangement needs to be established between mental health providers and the legal system in facilitating divorce education programs, mediation services, and counseling services for divorcing families. A variety of follow-up interventions should be available to divorcing families including skill-based programs, information-based programs, weekly divorced parent psychotherapy group sessions, mediation services, and individual counseling services. This multifaceted approache would

provide more intensive help for those parents needing more, intervene before situations reach a crisis state, and focus on the parenting relationship as the problem and not the child.

The result of this study has important implications for mental health practitioners, educators, and legal professionals (e.g. mediators, attorneys, and judges) in recognizing that changes in divorcing parents' behavior takes time and may involve a multidimensional program of services. Just because people are provided with information on healthy divorce adjustment does not mean they are able to immediately assimilate the information or implement changes within one month following a seminar. It can, however, increase their awareness and ability to recognize situations in which they may want to make changes. It is also important to educate attorneys, judges, and legislators on the need for mandating both parents to attend the seminars because of its importance in the child's ongoing relationship with both parents.

The courts only mandate the custodial parent to attend the seminar. In order for cooperation to occur, it is best if both parents have the same information. Since healthy child adjustment is related to a warm, supportive parent-child relationship and consistent discipline, including both parents in divorce education programs increases the likelihood of this occurring (Hess & Camera, 1979; Hetherington, et al., 1982; Rutter, 1971; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Follow-up services offered by the courts, attorneys, and mental health professionals to further foster cooperative parenting between the divorced parents may further assist divorcing parents of the information presented at such programs. Participation in divorce parent education programs may allow judges to expect

more cooperative and supportive parenting behaviors from divorced parents because they know parents have information about how interparental conflict and triangulation behaviors may harm their children.

Divorce education seminars should be considered a first step in a multi-dimensional prevention/intervention program. Some parents will gain information in a large group educational setting. Additional levels might include mediation, anger management groups, parent education groups, therapy groups, and individual or family therapy. Longer term, divorce education group therapy on a weekly basis for one or two months could provide a more intensive program for divorcing parents needing more support, experience, and knowledge to make the needed changes in divorce adjustment, cooperative parenting, and conflict management.

Limitations of the Study

This dissertation project focused on participants in a divorce parent education seminar and did not include a no-treatment group nor a waiting list control group. Although it was initially proposed to compare treatment and no-treatment groups on levels of interparental conflict, parent attitudes (knowledge of divorce and its impact on families and children), and coparenting behaviors, the author was unable to collect adequate numbers of no-treatment participant responses for data analysis purposes. The difficulties in collecting data from people may have been hindered by a number of factors. For example, people in the no-treatment group may have been reluctant to complete measures that were administered through the mail without some kind of immediate compensation. In general, this research is difficult especially due to the stressful nature of

court-related events surrounding the ending of a once intimate relationship. This sample of divorcing parents who participated in this study and completed both pre- and post-test assessments may not be representative of other divorcing parents across the nation. These parents may have been more internally motivated to participate in this study than those who chose not to participate. Those parents who chose to participate and completed both pre-test and post-test phases of this study were more likely to reside in urban areas and have fewer children in the home compared to those parents who only participated in the pre-test phase of this study. Being a divorcing parent from a rural area with more children may have prevented parents from participating given the time constraints related to larger families and the responsibilities of living in rural areas. Therefore, this may have resulted in a skewed sample that cannot be generalized to divorcing parents as a whole.

The instruments themselves were the third limitation of the study. Development of better measures for working with divorcing families, and specifically, measurement of the parameters taught in the divorced parent education programs, would be helpful in measuring outcomes of the program. The lack of sensitivity of the instruments to small changes could have contributed to a lack of significance.

In addition to the sensitivity of the measures used, the length of time from pre-test testing to post-test testing was only one month which might not have been sufficient to see significant changes in levels of interparental conflict, coparenting, and parent attitudes when considered together. While this time frame would allow for increases in knowledge and some change in behavior, actual behavior and attitude changes are take more time to occur and become established. If the assessment covered a longer time frame (follow-up

phases of the study), greater differences may have been detected on coparenting, knowledge of divorce and coping with its impact on families and children, and interparental conflict.

The lack of responsiveness by no-treatment divorcing parents was a major limitation to this study. It is impossible to know if there would have been any changes on these measures over time or if different changes may have emerged for treatment and no-treatment groups. In addition, the attrition rate of participants limits the generalizability of the study. It is unclear why some participants did not complete the post-test assessments. Since only custodial parents were mandated to attend the program and some non-custodial parents attended voluntarily, it is impossible to tell how this impacted the results and the generalizability of the study.

There is also the possibility that the seminar impacted participants in areas that were not measured by these instruments such as mood, relationship issues, parental guilt, and frequency of contact with children.

Summary

In general, the findings of this study revealed significant changes in knowledge of divorce and coping and triangulation over a one month period for parents who file for divorce and attend a four hour divorce education program. Participants with lower levels of interparental conflict reported higher levels of knowledge and better communication prior to the seminar than those with higher levels of interparental conflict. This would indicate parents with higher levels of interparental conflict need the program more than those with lower levels of conflict if the program addressed conflict reduction. Parents

with higher and lower levels of interparental conflict differ in levels of parental attitude (knowledge of divorce and its impact on families and children) and coparenting behaviors when considered together. This study provides some support for using divorced parent education programs. However, continued research into divorce education program effectiveness is warranted.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1

Demographics of Divorce Education Study Participants.

Variable	Response	N	Percent
Living Situation	Urban	32	48 %
	Suburban	18	27 %
	Rural	17	25 %
Age	20-29 Years	25	37 %
	30-39 Years	23	34 %
	40-49 Years	17	25 %
	>50 Years	2	3 %
Gender	Male	18	27 %
	Female	49	73 %
Education	9th Grade	1	1.5%
	10th Grade	2	3 %
	11th Grade	2	3 %
	High School/GED	27	40 %
	1 Year College	4	6 %
	Associate Degree (2 years College)	11	16 %
	3 Years College	4	6 %
	Bachelors Degree	8	12 %
	Masters Degree	1	1.5%
	Professional Degree	1	1.5%
Race	Asian American	1	1.5%
	Euro-American	57	85.1%
	Hispanic/Latino	2	3 %
	Native American/American Indian	7	10.4%

Table 1 Continued

Variable	Response	N	Percent
Income	<$10,000/year	14	20.9%
	$10,001-15,000/year	9	13.4%
	$15,001-20,000/year	12	17.9%
	$20,001-25-000/year	5	7.5%
	$25,001-30,000/year	7	10.4%
	$30,001-40,000/year	8	11.9%
	$40,001-50,000/year	7	10.4%
	$60,001-70,000/year	2	3 %
	>$90,000/year	2	3 %
Marriages	First	49	73.1%
	Second	13	19.4%
	Third	3	4.5%
	Fourth	1	1.5%
	>Fourth	1	1.5%
Length of Separation	<1 month	5	7.5%
	1-3 months	24	35.8%
	4-6 months	17	25.4%
	7-12 months	12	17.9%
	> 1 year	9	13.4%
Custody Arrangement	Disputed Custody	8	11.9%
	Mother, Sole Custody	30	44.8%
	Father, Sole Custody	3	4.5%
	Joint Custody, Mother Physical Custody	13	19.4%
	Joint Custody, Father Physical Custody	7	10.4%
	Joint Custody, Both Physical Custody	3	4.5%

Table 1 Continued

Variable	Response	N	Percent
Custody Arrangement Continued	Each Parent has some of the children	2	3 %
	Other	1	1.5%
Children, This Marriage	One Child	32	48 %
	Two Children	27	40 %
	Three Children	7	10.4%
	Four Children	1	1.5%
Children< 18 Years	One Child	36	54 %
	Two Children	24	36 %
	Three Children	7	10 %

Table 2

Parent Attitude Questionnaire Items and Loadings by Factor

	Factor Item Loading
Factor 1: Divorce Knowledge and Coping	
I know how children of different ages cope with divorce.	.81
I know how to help children of different ages cope with divorce.	.80
I know how to help my child.	.74
I know what changes to expect in my parent-child relationship as a result of the divorce.	.71
I understand the impact of divorce on children.	.70
I know what facts to share and not share with my child about problems related to divorce.	.67
I know how to explain divorce to my child.	.67
I know how to make my relationship with my children a healthy one.	.61
I understand the impact of divorce on adults.	.58
Factor 2: Divorce Adjustment	
I am better off being divorced than being married to my spouse.	-.81
I feel ready to deal with the divorce.	-.80

Table 2 continued

Parent Attitude Questionnaire Items and Loadings by Factor

	Factor Item Loading
Factor 3: Triangulation	
I can keep my child out of parent-parent conflicts.	.82
I will not say negative things about my ex-spouse in front of my children.	.73
I will not talk about financial matters with my ex-spouse in front of the children.	.70
Kids should be kept out of parents' arguments.	.58
Factor 4: Stress	
I am afraid	.73
I worry how the divorce will affect me financially	.69
During divorce one does not have a lot of energy to deal with children.	.59
Children need help in coping with divorce.	.48
Factor 5: Anger Expression	
I know how to separate my anger at my ex-spouse from my relationship with my children.	-.83
Factor 6: Coparenting	
Kids need to be with both of their parents.	.70
I know how to obtain child support.	.67
I know how to develop a business-like relationship with my ex-spouse.	.64

Table 3

Correlation Matrix for PAQ Factor Structure.

Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Factor 1	1.000					
Factor 2	.243**	1.000				
Factor 3	.388**	.206**	1.000			
Factor 4	- .132*	- .192**	-.050	1.000		
Factor 5	.039	.065	.075	- .021	1.000	
Factor 6	.488**	- .002	.260**	- .020	- .089	1.000

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of all Pre-Test and Post Test Dependent Variables.

		Pre-Test		Post-Test	
Measure	N	M	SD	M	SD
Porter-O'Leary Scale	67	23.2	7.0	22.0	6.8
Parent Attitude Questionnaire	67	135.3	13.7	139.2	12.3
Coparenting Index	65	64.1	17.4	60.1	17.5
PAQ 1 -Knowledge	66	46.3	8.6	49.6	8.5
PAQ 2 -Divorce Adjust.	65	12.1	2.5	12.0	2.7
PAQ 3 -Triangulation	65	24.3	4.2	25.4	2.9
PAQ 4 -Stress	65	18.7	5.1	19.0	4.9
PAQ 5 -Anger Express.	65	6.1	1.2	6.2	1.0
PAQ 6 -Coparenting	66	15.7	4.1	16.1	3.7

Table 5

Correlation Matrix of All Dependent Variables (Total Scores and Subscale Scores) for Pre-Test Study Participants.

Measure	POS	PAQ	CI	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
POS	1.000								
PAQ	-.142	1.000							
CI	.019	.113	1.000						
F1	-.126	.785**	-.061	1.000					
F2	-.066	.31*	-.211	.219	1.000				
F3	-.140	.545**	-.22	.382*	.158	1.000			
F4	.322**	.163	.092	-.235	-.113	-.029	1.000		
F5	-.372**	.398**	-.007	.387**	.092.	.373**	-.32**	1.00	
F6	.031	.515**	.42**	.343**	-.074	.183	-.01	.122	1.000

*p<.05; **p<.01

POS - Porter-O'Leary Scale

CI - Coparenting Index

PAQ - Parent Attitude Questionnaire

F1 - PAQ Knowledge of Divorce & Coping

F2 - PAQ Divorce Adjustment

F3 - PAQ Triangulation

F4 - PAQ Stress

F5 - PAQ Anger Expression

F6 - PAQ Coparenting

Table 6

Comparison of Continuous Demographic Variables for Summer and Winter Sampling Periods.

Variable	Season	N	M	SD	t	p
Age	Summer	202	2.80	.79		
	Winter	65	2.94	.90	1.73	.08
Education	Summer	187	12.83	1.94		
	Winter	57	13.28	2.0	-.19	.85
Income	Summer	194	3.98	2.55		
	Winter	65	4.51	3.07	4.70	.00**
Marriages	Summer	201	1.32	.66		
	Winter	65	1.40	.77	-.49	.63
Length of Separation	Summer	199	3.32	1.25		
	Winter	65	2.94	1.25	1.18	.24

** $p<.01$

Table 7

Comparison of Categorical Demographic Variables for Summer and Winter Samplings.

Variable	Season	N	χ^2	df	p
Living Situation	Summer	202			
	Winter	65	1.71	1	.19
Gender	Summer	199			
	Winter	65	1.42	1	.23
Race	Summer	196			
	Winter	65	1.98	1	.16
Custody Arrangement	Summer	201			
	Winter	65	.12	1	.73

Table 8

Comparison of Continuous Demographic Variables of Participants who Completed Pre-Test and Post-Test Assessment to Participants Only Completing the Pre-Test Assessment.

Variable	Completion	N	M	SD	t	p
Age	Completed	67	2.94	.87		
	Not Completed	200	2.80	.80	1.22	.22
Education	Completed	67	13.23	1.99		
	Not Completed	183	12.84	1.94	1.36	.18
Income	Completed	67	3.97	2.64		
	Not Completed	199	4.16	2.72	-.50	.62
Marriages	Completed	67	1.39	.78		
	Not Completed	199	1.32	.66	.68	.50
Length of Separation	Completed	67	2.94	1.18		
	Not Completed	197	3.32	1.28	-2.17	.03*
Children this Marriage	Completed	67	1.66	.73		
	Not Completed	199	1.81	.81	-1.36	.18
Children < 18 Years	Completed	67	1.57	.68		
	Not Completed	199	1.78	.79	-2.01	.046*
POS Pre-test Score	Completed	67	23.24	7.01		
	Not Completed	195	23.75	6.96	-.52	.60

*$p<.05$

Table 9

Comparison of Categorical Demographic Variables for Participants Completing Both Pre-Test and Post-Test Assessments with Participants Only Completing Pre-Test Assessments.

Variable	Completion	N	χ^2	df	p
Living Situation	Completed	67			
	Not Completed	200	4.51	1	.03*
Gender	Completed	67			
	Not Completed	197	6.57	1	.01**
Race	Completed	67			
	Not Completed	194	.72	1	.40
Custody Arrangement	Completed	67			
	Not Completed	199	2.61	1	.11

N= Number of Participants; df=degrees of freedom

*p<.05; **p<.01

Table 10

Comparison of Continuous Demographic Variables by Gender.

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Age	Male	106	2.95	.82		
	Female	158	2.78	.79	1.22	.14
Education	Male	94	12.97	1.72		
	Female	147	13.01	1.91	1.36	.18
Income	Male	101	5.08	2.49		
	Female	156	3.53	2.65	-.50	.62
Marriages	Male	105	1.30	.55		
	Female	158	1.34	.71	.68	.50
Length of Separation	Male	105	3.34	1.28		
	Female	158	3.15	1.25	-2.17	.03*

*$p<.05$

Table 11

Comparison of Categorical Demographic Variables by Gender.

Variable	Gender	N	χ^2	df	p
Living Situation	Male	106			
	Female	158	1.97	1	.16
Race	Male	103			
	Female	155	1.00	1	.32
Custody Arrangement	Male	105			
	Female	158	10.37	1	.001**

**p<.01

Table 12

Multivariate and Univariate Results of Interparental Conflict, Coparenting, and Parent Attitudes Over Time (Pre-Test and Post-Test).

Analysis	Measure	Hotelling's T	df	F	p
MANOVA		.096	3	1.76	.17
Univariate	POS		1	2.30	.14
	PAQ		1	3.02	.09
	CI		1	.07	.80

POS Porter-O'Leary Scale

PAQ Parent Attitude Questionnaire

CI Coparenting Index

Table 13

Correlation Matrix of Pre- and Post-Test Scores on the Porter-O'Leary Scale, Parent Attitude Questionnaire, and Coparenting Index

	POS1	PAQ1	CI1	POS2	PAQ2	CI2
POS1	1.000					
PAQ1	-0.142	1.000				
CI1	0.093	0.131	1.000			
POS2	0.714**	-0.170	0.014	1.000		
PAQ2	-0.042	0.536**	0.264*	-0.133	1.000	
CI2	0.117	0.012	-0.556**	-0.129	0.081	1.000

* .05 significance; **.01 significance

POS1- Porter-O'Leary Scale Pre-Test

POS2-Porter-O'Leary Scale Post-Test

PAQ1-Parent Attitude Questionnaire Pre-Test

PAQ2-Parent Attitude Questionnaire Post-Test

CI1-Coparenting Index Pre-Test

CI2-Coparenting Index Post-Test

Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations of Parent Attitude Questionnaire and Coparenting Index Scores in 2X2 (Higher and Lower Conflict X Pre-Test and Post-Test Time) MANOVA.

		Time		
Conflict	Measure	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Total
	PAQ	M = 131.76	M = 135.36	M = 133.56
		SD = 14.18	SD = 13.14	SD = 13.66
Higher				
N =25	CI	M = 61.20	M = 66.36	M = 63.78
		SD = 14.23	SD = 14.20	SD = 14.22
	PAQ	M = 138.71	M = 140.62	M = 139.67
		SD = 13.23	SD = 11.89	SD = 12.56
Lower				
N=34	CI	M = 64.62	M = 58.94	M = 61.78
		SD = 19.86	SD = 14.20	SD = 17.03
	PAQ	M = 135.76	M = 138.39	
		SD = 13.95	SD = 12.60	
Total				
N=59	CI	M = 63.17	M = 62.08	
		SD = 17.64	SD = 17.05	

Higher conflict=POS pre-test scores >23; Lower conflict = POS pre-test scores <24

PAQ Parent Attitude Questionnaire CI Coparenting Index

Table 15

Multivariate Analysis of Coparenting Index and Parent Attitude Questionnaire Scores by Time and Level of Conflict.

Effect	Hotelling's T	df	F	p
Conflict (Between Subjects)	.120	2	3.348	.04*
Time (Within Subjects)	.054	2	1.510	.23
Time X Conflict (Within Subjects)	.039	2	1.099	.34

*p<.05

Table 16

Univariate Analysis (Within Group Contrasts) of Parental Attitude Questionnaire and Coparenting Scores by Time and Conflict.

Source	Measure	df	F	p
Time	PAQ	1	3.07	.09
	CI	1	.004	.95
Time X Conflict	PAQ	1	.29	.59
	CI	1	1.84	.18

PAQ --Parent Attitude Questionnaire

CI --Coparenting Index

Table 17

Pre- and Post-Test Means and Standard Deviations for Interparental Conflict, Parental Attitude Questionnaire, and Coparenting Index Scores (N=58)

Measure	Pre-test	Post-Test
POS	M = 23.55	M = 22.42
	SD = 7.11	SD = 6.69
PAQ	M = 135.29	M = 138.95
	SD = 13.84	SD = 12.24
CI	M = 63.21	M = 62.16
	SD = 17.79	SD = 17.19

POS --Porter-O'Leary Scale

PAQ --Parent Attitude Questionnaire

CI --Coparenting Index

Table 18

One way MANOVA of the Parent Attitude Questionnaire Factors as Dependent Variables.

Test	Source	Factor	Hotelling's T	F	df	p
MANOVA	Time		59.00	2.51	6	.03*
Univariate		Factor 1		9.85	1	.003**
		Factor 2		1.03	1	.32
		Factor 3		4.60	1	.04*
		Factor 4		.67	1	.42
		Factor 5		1.09	1	.30
		Factor 6		.19	1	.67

* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

Factor 1: Knowledge of Divorce and Coping Issues

Factor 2: Divorce Adjustment

Factor 3: Triangulation

Factor 4: Stress

Factor 5: Anger Expression

Factor 6: Coparenting

Table 19

Univariate Analysis of PAQ Factors by Time and Conflict.

Source	Factor	df	F	p
Conflict	Factor 1	1	3.46	.07
	Factor 2	1	1.26	.27
	Factor 3	1	8.29	.005**
	Factor 4	1	3.65	.06
	Factor 5	1	9.07	.004**
	Factor 6	1	.03	.87
Time	Factor 1	1	9.72	.003**
	Factor 2	1	1.07	.31
	Factor 3	1	5.29	.03*
	Factor 4	1	.72	.40
	Factor 5	1	.73	.40
	Factor 6	1	.27	.61
Time X Conflict	Factor 1	1	.006	.936
	Factor 2	1	.58	.45
	Factor 3	1	.28	.60
	Factor 4	1	.09	.76
	Factor 5	1	.06	.81
	Factor 6	1	2.22	.14

**p<.01

*p<.05

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations of the PAQ Factor Scores in 2X2 (Higher and Lower Conflict X Pre-Test and Post-Test Time) MANOVA.

		Time		
Conflict	Measure	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Total
Higher	Factor 1	M = 44.74	M = 47.71	M=46.23
N=31		SD = 7.14	SD = 9.74	SD=8.44
	Factor 2	M = 12.23	M = 12.13	M=12.18
		SD = 2.55	SD = 2.32	SD=2.44
	Factor 3	M = 23.32	M = 24.39	M=23.86
		SD = 4.43	SD = 3.48	SD= 3.96
	Factor 4	M = 19.71	M = 20.29	M=20.22
		SD = 4.59	SD = 4.19	SD=4.39
	Factor 5	M = 5.47	M = 5.90	M= 5.69
		SD = 1.44	SD = 1.11	SD= 1.28
	Factor 6	M = 15.29	M = 16.23	M=15.76
		SD = 4.01	SD = 3.62	SD= 3.82
Lower	Factor 1	M = 48.18	M = 51.00	M=49.59
N=33		SD = 8.48	SD = 6.90	SD=7.69
	Factor 2	M = 11.88	M = 11.24	M=11.56
		SD = 2.51	SD = 3.02	SD= 2.77
	Factor 3	M = 25.55	M = 26.21	M= 25.88
		SD = 2.41	SD = 1.95	SD= 2.18
	Factor 4	M = 17.73	M = 18.00	M=17.87
		SD = 5.44	SD = 5.22	SD= 5.33
	Factor 5	M = 6.42	M = 6.52	M= 6.47

Table 20 Continued

		Time		
Conflict	Measure	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Total
	Factor 6	M = 16.12	M = 15.67	M=15.90
		SD = 3.97	SD = 4.56	SD= 4.27
Total	Factor 1	M = 46.52	M = 49.41	
N=64		SD = 7.99	SD = 8.49	
	Factor 2	M = 12.05	M = 11.67	
		SD = 2.52	SD = 2.72	
	Factor 3	M = 24.47	M = 25.33	
		SD = 3.68	SD = 2.92	
	Factor 4	M = 18.69	M = 19.11	
		SD = 5.10	SD = 4.85	
	Factor 5	M = 6.09	M = 6.22	
		SD = 1.20	SD = .95	
	Factor 6	M = 15.72	M = 15.94	
		SD = 3.98	SD = 3.62	

Higher conflict=POS pre-test scores >23; N=25;

Lower conflict = POS pre-test scores <24; N=34

APPENDIX B

LETTERS

Cover Letter for Initial Pre-Test Assessment

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study to better understand the impact of the divorce process on families. This study will be important in identifying what factors may be helpful for families going through divorce and afterward. Your name and address were selected from the court records of families currently involved in a divorce action in the state of Oklahoma.

Participation in this study involves the completion of four short questionnaires. **Completing these four questionnaires should take no more than 30 minutes of your time.** Possible benefits of participating in this study include increased awareness of your attitudes and behaviors and the impact of divorce on your children. I hope the results of this study will be of national importance as far as helping divorcing families. There are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. In addition to these questionnaires, you will be asked to complete a similar set of questionnaires at two other times over the next four months. **If you choose to participate, please sign the "Informed consent," complete the questionnaires and return them in the postage paid envelope provided for your convenience.** The returned questionnaire envelopes will be entered in a drawing for a $50 gift certificate on May 23, 1997.

Your confidentiality will be strictly maintained. All of the information you provide is confidential, and no individual participant or answer will be identified. Questionnaire responses will be tracked by identification numbers rather than by names. Identification numbers are for data analysis purposes only.

I genuinely appreciate your participation in this study. **I ask that you complete and return these questionnaires as soon as possible, preferably within the next week.** If you have questions you may contact Jacqueline Gray or Carrie Winterowd at (405)744-6036 or Gay Clarkson with the Institutional Review Board at (405)744-5700. If you are interested in obtaining the results of this study, please complete the form at the bottom of this cover sheet and return this page with your survey. To maintain the confidentiality of your participation, this sheet and the consent form will be separated from the questionnaires upon receiving them. Thank you for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline W. Gray

Complete the following and return this letter with the questionnaires if you wish to know the results of this study:

Name: _____ **Address:** _____

Cover Letter for 1 Month Post Test Assessment

Dear Parent:

Last month you returned completed questionnaires indicating your interest in participating in this research study on the impact of the divorce process on families. I appreciated your interest and time in completing those questionnaires. In the second phase of this study, participation involves the completion of three questionnaires. Please mark your answers relating to your attitudes and behaviors over the past four weeks.

Completing these three questionnaires should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. Possible benefits of participating in this study include increased awareness of your attitudes and behaviors and the impact of divorce on your children. I hope the results of this study will be of national importance as far as helping divorcing families. Again, there are no foreseeable risks of participating and your participation is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. **If you choose to continue participation at this time, please complete these questionnaires and return them in the postage paid envelope provided for your convenience.** By completing and returning the questionnaires, you are giving your informed consent for continued participation in this study. The envelopes of those returning the completed questionnaires by June 15, 1997 will be entered into a drawing for a $50 gift certificate. After returning this set of completed questionnaires you will receive one final set of questionnaires to complete in about two months.

Your confidentiality will be maintained. All of the information you provide is strictly confidential, and no individual participant will be identified. Questionnaire responses will be tracked by identification numbers rather than by names. Identification numbers are for data analysis purposes only.

I genuinely appreciate your participation in this study. This study will be important in identifying what factors may help divorcing families. **I ask that you complete and return these questionnaires as soon as possible, preferably within the next week.** If you have questions you may contact Jacqueline Gray or Carrie Winterowd at (405)744-6036 or Gay Clarkson with the Institutional Review Board at (405)744-5700. Thank you for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline W. Gray

Letter for Three Month Follow-up

Dear Parent:

This is the third of three sets of questionnaires for a research study on the impact of the divorce process on families. I appreciate your interest and time in completing the two previous sets of questionnaires. In the third phase of this study participation involves the completion of three questionnaires. Please mark your answers relating to your attitudes and behaviors over the past two months.

Completing these three questionnaires should take no more than 30 minutes. Possible benefits of participating in this study include increased awareness of your attitudes and behaviors and the impact of divorce on your children. I hope the results of this study will be of national importance as far as helping divorcing families. Again, there are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. **If you choose to continue participation at this time, please complete these questionnaires and return them in the postage paid envelope provided for your convenience.** By completing and returning the questionnaires, you are giving you are consenting to continued participation in this study. The envelopes of those returning completed questionnaires by August 15, 1997 will be entered into a drawing for a $100 gift certificate.

Your confidentiality will be maintained. All of the information you provide is strictly confidential, and no individual participant will be identified. Questionnaire responses will be tracked by identification numbers rather than by names. Identification numbers are for data analysis purposes only.

I genuinely appreciate your continued participation in this study. This study will be important in identifying what factors may help families of divorce. **I ask that you complete and return these questionnaires as soon as possible, preferably within the next week.** If you have questions you may contact Jacqueline Gray or Carrie Winterowd at (405)744-6036 or Gay Clarkson with the Institutional Review Board at (405)744-5700. Thank you for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline W. Gray

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Demographic Information

Please check the box or fill in the blank with the answer that best fits your current situation for each of the questions below.

1. In what type of community do you live?
- ☐ Urban (city of more than 50,000)
- ☐ Suburban (town or area next to a city of 50,000 or more)
- ☐ Rural (town of 50,000 or less not next to an urban area.

2. Age (Check one):
- ☐ Under 20 years
- ☐ 20-29 years
- ☐ 30-39 years
- ☐ 40-49 years
- ☐ 50 and over

3. Gender (Check one): ☐ Male ☐ Female

4. Education:
Number of Years Completed:

_____

5. Occupation: _____

6. Race (Check one):
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Asian-American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American/American Indian: Tribal Affiliation: _____
- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ Biracial (Specify):_____
- ☐ Other (Specify): _____

7. Current household income (Check one):
- ☐ Less than $10,000/year
- ☐ $10,001-15,000/year
- ☐ $15,001-20,000/year
- ☐ $20,001-25,000/year
- ☐ $25,001-30,000/year
- ☐ $30.001-40,000/year
- ☐ $40,001-50,000/year
- ☐ $50,001-60,000/year
- ☐ $60,001-70,000/year
- ☐ $70,001-80,000/year
- ☐ $80,001-90,000/year
- ☐ $90,001 or more/year

8. Marriages prior to this one (Check one):
- ☐ None
- ☐ One
- ☐ Two
- ☐ Three
- ☐ More than three

9. Time since separation (Check one):
- ☐ Less than one month
- ☐ 1-3 months
- ☐ 3-6 months
- ☐ 6-12 months
- ☐ Over 1 year.

10. Custody Arrangement (Check one):
- ☐ Custody currently in dispute
- ☐ Mother has sole custody
- ☐ Father has sole custody
- ☐ Joint legal custody, lives with mother
- ☐ Joint legal custody, lives with father
- ☐ Joint legal & physical custody
- ☐ Each parent has some of the children
- ☐ Other (Specify):_____

11. Number of children:
- **a. from this marriage:** _____
- **b. under 18 years:** _____

12. Are you participating in a divorce parent education program?
(Check one) ☐Yes ☐ No
- **a. If yes** (Check one):
  - ☐ Volunteer ☐ Court-Ordered

APPENDIX D

INSTRUMENTS

PORTER-O'LEARY SCALE

Please answer all of the following questions to the best of your ability. The questions refer to your child(ren), only.

1. It is difficult in these days of tight budgets to confine financial discussions to specific times and places. How often would you say you and your (ex)spouse argue over money matters in front of your child(ren).

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

2. Children often go to one parent for money or permission to do something after having been refused by the other parent. How often would you say your child(ren) approach(es) you or your (ex)spouse in this manner with rewarding results?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

3. Husbands and wives often disagree on the subject of discipline. How often do you and your (ex)spouse argue over disciplinary problems in your child(ren)'s presence?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

4. How often has/have your child(ren) heard you and your (ex)spouse argue about the wife's role in the family? (Housewife, working wife, etc.)

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

5. How often does your (ex)spouse complain to you about your personal habits (drinking, nagging, sloppiness, etc.) in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

6. How often do you complain to your (ex)spouse about his/her personal habits in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

7. In every normal marriage there are arguments. What percentage of the arguments between you and your (ex)spouse would you say take place in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

8. To varying degrees, we all experience almost irresistible impulses in times of great stress. How often is there physical expression of hostility between you and your (ex)spouse in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

9. How often do you and/or your (ex)spouse display verbal hostility in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

10. How often do you and your (ex)spouse display affection for each other in front of your child(ren)?

_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often _____ Very Often

Porter, B. & O'Leary, K.D. (1980). Marital discord and childhood behavior problems. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 8(3), 287-295.

Helping Children of Separation and Divorce Seminar Evaluation (Parent Attitude Questionnaire)

Circle the number that best represents your feeling about each statement below.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat Disagree 4 = Neutral 5 = Somewhat Agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1. Kids should be kept out of parents' arguments.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2. I know how to explain divorce to my child.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	3. I know what facts to share and not to share with my child about problems related to the divorce.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	4. I understand the impact of divorce on children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	5. Kids need to be with both of their parents.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	6. I know how to help my child.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7. I understand the impact of divorce on adults.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8. I know how children of different ages cope with divorce.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	9. I know how to help children of different ages cope with divorce.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	10. I know how to separate my anger at my ex-spouse from my relationship with my children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	11. I know how to develop a business-like relationship with my ex-spouse.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	12. I know how to obtain child support.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	13. I know what changes to expect in my parent-child relationship as a result of the divorce.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	14. Children need help in coping with divorce.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	15. I know how to make my relationship with my children a healthy one.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	16. I will not talk about financial matters with my ex-spouse in front of the children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	17. I can keep my child out of parent-parent conflicts.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	18. I will not say negative things about my ex-spouse in front of my children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	19. I will spend 10 minutes alone each day with my child.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	20. During divorce one does not have a lot of energy to deal with children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	21. I am afraid.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	22. I am better off being divorced than being married to my spouse.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	23. I think my spouse and I will agree on how to deal with our children.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	24. I worry how the divorce will affect me financially.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	25. I feel ready to deal with the divorce.

Frieman, B.B., Garon, R., & Mandell, B. (1994). Parenting Seminars for Divorcing Parents. Social Work, 39(5), 607-610.

COPARENTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A.
Circle the number that most closely agrees with your interactions with your ex-spouse.

1 = Always 2= Usually 3 = Sometimes
4 = Occasionally 5 = Never

Always Usually Sometimes Occasionally Never	
1 2 3 4 5	1. Discussions of parenting issues with (ex)spouse ends in argument.
1 2 3 4 5	2. The underlying atmosphere is one of hostility or anger.
1 2 3 4 5	3. The conversation is stressful or tense.
1 2 3 4 5	4. You and your (ex)spouse have basic differences of opinion about issues related to child rearing.
1 2 3 4 5	5. You go out of your way to accommodate your (ex) spouse's need to change visiting arrangements.
1 2 3 4 5	6. Your (ex)spouse goes out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make.
1 2 3 4 5	7. You feel your (ex)spouse understands and is supportive of your special needs as a custodial (or noncustodial) parent.
1 2 3 4 5	8. When you need help regarding the children, you seek it from your (ex)spouse.
1 2 3 4 5	9. Your (ex)spouse is a resource to you in raising the children.
1 2 3 4 5	10. You are a resource to your (ex)spouse in raising the children.
1 2 3 4 5	11. Share the making of major decisions regarding your children's lives.
1 2 3 4 5	12. Share the making of day to day decisions about your children's lives.
1 2 3 4 5	13. Discuss personal problems your children may be experiencing with your (ex)spouse.
1 2 3 4 5	14. Discussing your children's school or medical problems with your (ex)spouse.
1 2 3 4 5	15. Planning special events in your children's lives with your (ex)spouse.
1 2 3 4 5	16. Talk with your (ex)spouse about your children's accomplishments and progress.
1 2 3 4 5	17. Talk with your (ex)spouse about problems you are having raising the children.
1 2 3 4 5	18. Discuss with your (ex)spouse how the children are adjusting to the divorce.
1 2 3 4 5	19. Discuss with your (ex)spouse problems you are having with the coparenting relationship.
1 2 3 4 5	20. Discuss with your (ex)spouse finances related to your children.

Part B.

Circle the number that best indicates your communication with your ex-spouse.

Never	Rarely	Every Few Months	1-2 / Month	Once/Week	Daily	
1	2	3	4	5	6	1. Talking about extended family (mother, father, etc., but not the children).
1	2	3	4	5	6	2. Talking about old friends you have in common.
1	2	3	4	5	6	3. Talking about new experiences in your present lives.
1	2	3	4	5	6	4. Discussing finances not related to the children.
1	2	3	4	5	6	5. Talking about past marriage.
1	2	3	4	5	6	6. Talking about personal problems.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7. Talking about why you got divorced.
1	2	3	4	5	6	8. Having physical contact (e.g. hugging without sex)
1	2	3	4	5	6	9. Talking about reconciling (marrying each other again).
1	2	3	4	5	6	10. Helping each other with household tasks
1	2	3	4	5	6	11. Dating each other
1	2	3	4	5	6	12. Having sexual intercourse
1	2	3	4	5	6	13. Going out to dinner without the children.

1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = every few months
4 = once or twice monthly 5 = once weekly 6 = daily

Adapted from: Ahrons, C.R. (1981). The continuing coparental relationship between divorced spouses. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 51, 315-328.

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Jacqueline Gray or associates of her choosing, to perform the following procedure:

Participation in this study involves the completion of four short questionnaires at three separate times over the next four months. **Completing each set of questionnaires should take no more than 30 minutes of your time.** After the first set of questionnaires are completed and returned the "Informed Consent" will be immediately separated from the participant's responses. A log sheet with code numbers and participant names and addresses will be maintained in a separate locked file. These addresses will only be used to address follow-up mailings to participants. The envelopes of those returning questionnaire packets will be entered into a drawing for a gift certificate at the completion of each set of questionnaires. A $50 gift certificate will be awarded following each of the first two sets of questionnaires and a $100 gift certificate will be awarded at the completion of the third set of questionnaires. Mailing of the gift certificates of the drawing winners are the only times the code numbers will be used to identify participants. When the drawing for the third and final mailing is completed the log sheets with names and addresses will be destroyed. Your confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Only the principal investigators of this study will have access to the names and code numbers. All of the information you provide is strictly confidential, and no individual participant will be identified. Questionnaire responses will be scored and only aggregate scores will be utilized in the analysis. Individual item responses for individuals will never be utilized.

This is a study to better understand the impact of the divorce process on families. This study will be important in identifying what factors may be helpful for families going through divorce and afterward. Potential participants in this study were selected from the court records of families currently involved in a divorce action in the state of Oklahoma.

Possible benefits of participating in this study include increased awareness of participants attitudes and behaviors and the impact of divorce on their children. The results of this study may be of national importance as far as helping divorcing families. There are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study.

I understand that participation is voluntary that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.

I may contact the principal investigators, Jacqueline Gray or Carrie Winterowd, at 434 Willard, Stillwater, OK, 74078 or (405)744-6036. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, IRB Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078 or (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

Date: _____ Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____

APPENDIX F
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 01-24-97 **IRB#: ED-97-046**

Proposal Title: EFFECTIVENESS OF A COURT-MANDATED DIVORCED PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Principal Investigator(s): Carrie Winterowd, Jacqueline Gray

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____ Date: January 27, 1997

Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Jacqueline Gray

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 01-24-97 **IRB#: ED-97-046**

Proposal Title: EFFECTIVENESS OF A COURT-MANDATED DIVORCED PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Principal Investigator(s): Carrie Winterowd, Jacqueline Gray

Reviewed and Processed as: Modification

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____ Date: January 27, 1997

Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Jacqueline Gray

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: January 24, 1997 **IRB #: ED-97-046**

Proposal Title: EFFECTIVENESS OF A COURT-MANDATED DIVORCED PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Principal Investigator(s): Carrie Winterowd, Jacqueline Gray

Reviewed and Processed as: Continuation

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____ Date: January 16, 1998
Chair of Institutional Review Board
Cc: Jacqueline Gray

VITA 2

Jacqueline S. Gray

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COURT-MANDATED DIVORCED PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Enid, Oklahoma On September 2, 1951, the daughter of Harold and Peggy Westfahl.

Education: Graduated from Drummond High School, Drummond, Oklahoma in May of 1969. Received a Bachelor of Science degree in Laboratory Technology from The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in May of 1977. Completed the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Guidance and Counseling Psychology from The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in May of 1984.

Experience: Employed by The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in biochemistry and microbiology medical research, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (1977-1981). Employed by Norman Regional Hospital as a histology aide, Norman, Oklahoma (1981-1982). Employed as a Math and Science Teacher's Aide and Title IV Indian Education tutor and counselor (1981-1986). Employed as a Counselor/ Advocate for the Women's Resource Center and Battered Women's Shelter, Norman, Oklahoma (1983-1986). Employed as a Psychological Assistant for Creek County Health Department, Sapulpa, Oklahoma (1986-1994). Graduate and Teaching Assistantships at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma (1994-1998). Psychology Intern at University of Wyoming University Counseling Center, Laramie, Wyoming (1997-1998).

Professional Memberships: American Psychological Association; American Psychological Association of Graduate Students; APA Division 17, Counseling Psychology; Division 17 Section for the Advancement of Women; Division 17 Section on Race and Ethnic Diversity; APA Division 45, Society for the Study of Ethnic Minority Issues; Society of Indian Psychologists; Southwest Psychological Association; American Educational Research Association, Division E: Counseling and Human Development; AERA Stress and Coping Special Interest Group.