

**The Efficacy of Divorce Education:
A Pilot Study Evaluating FamilyKind's Implementation of the
New York State Parent Education and Awareness Program**

by

James Grimaldi

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ABSTRACT

The research on children whose parents are separated or divorced presents much debate regarding the role of risk factors and the influence of interventions to mitigate negative outcomes. Reviews of research on divorce have consistently supported findings that children of divorce have a higher incidence of mental health, substance abuse, academic, and social problems than their peers from intact families. Short-term parent divorce education (PDE) programs are the most widely prescribed intervention for families going through the divorce process, and recent evidence supports the positive effects of PDE classes on parent behavior and child adjustment post-divorce. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a community-based implementation of the New York State-certified Parent Education and Awareness Program (PEAP) by the non-profit organization FamilyKind. The present study examined the impact of divorce education through a cross-sectional design with a 3- or 6-month follow-up. A pilot sample of participants (treatment group) provided self-report data on parenting attitudes and practices compared to a control group of divorcing parents who did not receive the intervention. Independent-samples *t* tests were used to analyze the mean differences between the groups after the follow-up. The follow-up with parents attempted to evaluate whether the PEAP curriculum was associated with higher ratings of co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy on self-report questionnaires when compared with controls. Participants who received the PEAP intervention reported significantly higher levels of parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy than participants in the control group. There were

no significant effects for co-parenting. Participants who received PEAP were generally satisfied with the intervention, felt comfortable sharing their experiences and participating, felt hopeful regarding their parenting abilities upon completion of the program, and indicated that they would recommend the program to others.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A first marriage ending in divorce has a lifetime probability approaching 45%, with half of these divorces involving children (Amato, 2010; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). Since the 1960s, best practices in divorce and custody decisions have been a topic of debate with the establishment of the first state family court systems. Following the advent of no-fault divorce legislation and a progressive decline in religiosity, Americans have had increasing access to marriage dissolution. The family courts in many states are overwrought with the integration of social systems (e.g., mental health and forensic assessment) required to enact juvenile jurisprudence (e.g., responding to abuse and neglect), as well as issues of family dissolution (e.g., divorce and custody). Furthermore, in many state-funded family courts, there are limited resources allocated to preventative interventions (Babb, 2005).

With 50% of all marital dissolutions involving children (Amato, 2000; Krieder, 2011; Raley & Bumpass, 2003), it is estimated that up to 1.25 million American children experience the divorce of their parents every year (Arkowitz & Lilienfeld, 2013; Fagan & Churchill, 2012). The number of children who experience divorce each year remains an estimate, as the Centers for Disease Control stopped gathering data on children of divorce in 1988 (with the last count being 1,044,000 children). According to data from the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey—which began publishing comprehensive data in 2008 on marriage and divorce, again after a 20-year hiatus from the Centers

for Disease Control's count of children—less than half (46%) of children reach the age of 18 in an intact nuclear family, and the average U.S. marriage only lasts approximately 8 years (Anderson, 2016; Eickmeyer, 2016).

The ambiguity of divorce statistics dates back to 1889 when the first national counts were published (after much prodding from the National Divorce Reform League), producing crude estimates, as there was no formal process for covering all states in the union (Adams, 2003). From the 1950s until the 1990s, the National Center for Divorce Statistics collected marriage and divorce statistics with broadband coverage of the U.S. population. In 1996, however, funding was cut to the National Center for Divorce Statistics, making national marriage and divorce data no longer available (Coltrane & Adams, 2003). The gaps in accuracy of marriage and divorce statistics has thus allowed for self-interest groups with advocacy initiatives (e.g., the National Marriage Project and conservative religious groups) to advance their own moral claims regarding divorce as an epidemic without valid evidence to the contrary. Much of the findings of early divorce research relied on incidence rates to identify implications for marriages that ended in divorce, which does not accurately account for the rate of divorce necessary to make causal assumptions linked to adjustment outcomes (Amato, 2003).

In general, a multitude of events related to parent separation and divorce have significant potential implications for adjustment for all members of the family system. Adjustment after divorce is subject to multiple stressors and transitions (e.g., moves, financial losses, parents' new partners or stepparents) that can increase the challenges which confront parents and children. Children of divorce have been reported to show significantly increased risk for problems as compared to peers from intact families (Amato &

Keith, 1991b). Common negative outcomes associated with children of divorce include lower academic achievement, more behavioral issues, more negative self-concepts, poorer psychological adjustment, greater social problems, more difficulties in parent relationships, and overall lower levels of well-being (Amato, 1994). More recently, researchers have been analyzing the various factors impacting family formation to predict risks for negative outcomes (Anderson & Greene, 2005; Anderson et al., 2004; Cavanagh & Huston, 2008; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Martinez & Forgatch, 2002; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007; Raley & Wildsmith, 2004). Parenting and the stress of raising children represent the highest increased risk, as the majority of families undergoing divorce include a child under age 6 (Whiteside & Becker, 2000).

Despite the numerous negative outcomes experienced by children of divorce, research has demonstrated that interventions targeting the mechanisms of resiliency buffer against risk factors for parents and improve child well-being (DeLusé & Braver, 2015; Fackrell, Hawkins, & Kay, 2011). The most integral mechanisms for resiliency in children are the quality of relationship between parents and the level of co-parenting achieved post-divorce, which have a greater impact on children than the divorce itself (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989). The most widely used intervention for facilitating more cooperative interparental relationships post-divorce are parent divorce education (PDE) programs, which are psychoeducational classes often mandated by a judge or referee at the initiation of a separation agreement or divorce proceedings.

Theoretical Framework of Psychoeducation for Divorce

In the context of mental health and public health, Wood, Brendtro, Fecser, and Nichols (1999) designated *psychoeducation* as an instructional group setting that provides

adaptive alternatives to maladaptive thinking and relational patterns. According to Wood et al., an effective psychoeducational program is integrative, holistic, multicultural, functional, multimodal, comprehensive, and systemic. For Morse (2004), the theoretical framework for psychoeducation involves a highly flexible and inclusive format that draws on encouragement and normalization through a structured group social interaction. Morse outlined the function of psychoeducation as dispensing valid evidence and information to motivate change or resilience through problem solving and enhancing practical skills. Landsverk and Kane (1998) found that psychoeducation helped to increase coping skills, self-efficacy, and stress management strategies, all of which contributed to building resiliency in response to mental health issues. Psychoeducation is more traditionally confined to mental health modalities, yet divorce is consistently associated with mental health and public health outcomes.

Implications for PDE

Salem, Sandler, and Wolchik (2013) explained that the PDE program models focus on providing psychoeducation in a short-term, interactive group-format that imparts helpful information addressing the most salient concerns that parents and children face post-divorce. Salem et al. identified a need for more evidence-based methodologies with validated theoretical frameworks. The broadband goal of PDE is to affect parenting in a way that reduces the impact of negative outcomes related to family dissolution, ultimately making the divorce process more manageable.

Blaisure and Geasler (2000) attempted to group programs into the framework of the divorce education intervention model. Their nationwide survey (Geasler & Blaisure, 1999) led to the designation of programs into three tiers based on (a) content, (b) time (or

dosage), (c) teaching format, and (d) intervention goals. Short-term programs were designated as Level 1, long-term programs were Level 2, and multi-format and specified programs were Level 3. The most prevalent and popular interventions are the Level 1, short-term programs (Geasler & Blaisure, 1999; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). Although there is still a call for more rigorous research on the effects of short-term PDEs, they have proliferated rapidly with minimal financial cost for implementation and limited demands on parents in the already stressful divorce process (Brandon, 2006). Specifically, PDEs offer insight to parents regarding co-parenting, taking their child(ren) out “of the middle” (reducing triangulation), adaptive coping, stress management, developmentally attuned parenting, practical legal information, and strategies for communication that limit conflict (DeLusé & Braver, 2015).

Implications for Public Health

Salem et al. (2013) proposed PDE as part of a broader framework of public health within the family court system. The specific goals of parent psychoeducation directly address public health outcomes (e.g., reducing chronic interparental conflict that can be damaging to a children’s well-being; increasing co-parenting communication strategies to moderate triangulation) and emphasize collaborative parenting plans with the child’s interests as the highest priority (Edwards, 2007). The skills and practices outlined in a PDE encourage healthier approaches to parenting time, child custody, and relocation while accounting for the psychological impact on children. Additionally, in the long term, the reduction in stress and anxiety associated with stable parenting yields better health later in life (Bauserman, 2002; Fabricius, Sokol, Diaz, & Braver, 2012). The direct public health benefit is observable when children who have agency in communicating their needs

within a low-stress and low-conflict environment demonstrate improved long-term outcomes (Wolchik et al., 2002). For example, Forgatch, Patterson, and DeGarmo (2005) conducted a randomized trial of a preventive intervention with a sample ($N = 238$) of recently single mothers and their primary school-aged sons immersed in the family dissolution process. Results showed that preventative parent training significantly reduced delinquent behaviors in boys prior to adolescence. The positive effects were associated with greater parenting skills and monitoring among mothers, and reduced maladaptive peer relationships among boys. Boys in the intervention group continued to demonstrate positive outcomes to a greater extent than boys in the control group, as indicated by teacher reports at 36 months follow-up, which evidenced the boys' greater adjustment to the community. The study concluded that these parenting interventions benefitted society and public health, protecting against negative social learning and reducing first offenses, which are linked to long-term psychopathology and criminality.

Additionally, Salem et al. (2013) conceptualized four key components of divorce as a public health issue:

- (1) Divorce is viewed as a risk factor for negative outcomes of children;
- (2) Children's post-divorce adjustment problems are associated with protective factors and risk factors that are potentially malleable by interventions;
- (3) There is solid empirical evidence of the effectiveness of programs for divorced families; and
- (4) Different levels of parent education are appropriate for families with different levels of need. (p. 137)

The public health model thus allows for a more generalizable application of PDE programs in conjunction with the family court and community providers. FamilyKind's

Parent Education and Awareness Program (PEAP) targets the goals outlined by Salem et al. (2013). The present study examined the impact of divorce education through a cross-sectional design with a 3- or 6-month follow-up. A pilot sample of participants (treatment group) provided self-report data on parenting attitudes and parenting practices, as compared to a control group of divorcing parents who did not receive the intervention. Independent sample *t* tests were used to assess the mean differences between the groups after 3 or 6 months. The follow-up with parents after participating in the FamilyKind program allowed for an evaluation of the PEAP curriculum's influence on ratings of co-parenting, as well as parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy on self-report questionnaires. In sum, PDE programs have the potential to expand on models of psychoeducation and challenge the family court system to implement a more holistic framework for prevention to enhance outcomes for children of divorce, as well as U.S. public health on a broader scale.

Definition of Terms

Divorce: The legal termination of a marriage.

Separation: The initial date when spouses fully terminate cohabitation. Separation is measured from the date on which one or both parties move to separate domiciles. The latency between separation and divorce is the interval or time between the date of separation and the date of the divorce certificate (which allows for remarriage). It is often erroneously believed that a legal document must be filed to be legally separated. Many participants were still separated at the time they attended FamilyKind's PEAP.

Mediation: A method of dispute resolution involving a neutral third party that tries to help the disputing parties reach a mutually agreeable solution regarding custody

and access to children, child support, spousal support, as well as the division of matrimonial assets and debts. Also called *alternative dispute resolution*, the process can be used to resolve legal disputes outside of the traditional litigation system.

Family/marital dissolution or disruption: Disruption and dissolution are used interchangeably in this study to describe separation and divorce. Family systems with single parent or parental cohabitation arrangements, including widowhood, are not defined as family or marital disruption/dissolution. Both divorces and legal separations are included in the terms family/marital dissolution or disruption, as it is extremely rare that legal separation results in reconciliation or a repaired marriage (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991; Tumin, Han, & Qian, 2015). Many reunions are attempted after separation agreements; however, the majority of spouses complete divorce (Binstock & Thornton, 2003).

Interparental conflict: Any conflict between parents to which they expose their child. This conflict can be characterized by arguments or disagreements that involve a combative tone, defamation, criticism, overt dismissal, and physical altercations (e.g., hitting, pushing, kicking, throwing objects, or destroying property). Interparental conflict should be distinguished from triangulation, whereby children are “caught” in the middle of parental conflict through a proximal effect. Triangulation actively places or forces the child into the middle of their parents’ relationship in triangulated communications.

Residential (custodial) parent: The parent with whom the child(ren) live or primarily reside; the *non-residential (non-custodial parent)* is the other parent.

Two-parent/intact family: A family system in which parents are married and living together with their children. For the purposes of this study, the researcher has applied

the *Oxford Dictionary* definition, “a nuclear family in which membership has remained constant, in the absence of divorce or other divisive factors” (“Intact Family,” n.d.).

Single-parent family: A family in which one parent and his/her children live in a home without the other parent. The single-parent family can be part of a larger intergenerational household, in a non-nuclear family system.

Step and/or blended family: A family comprised of a remarried couple, where one or both spouses have at least one child from a previous relationship living part or full time in the household [the non-biological parent of the child(ren) gains the title of step-parent].

Parent divorce education (PDE) or parent education: An intervention or program focusing on facilitating post-divorce parenting, improving parents’ adjustment, and understanding children’s adjustment to divorce (Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 2011). The majority of divorce education programs are court-connected (with parents referred by a family court judge or referee) and short term (between 2–6 hours). PDE programs vary in design, implementation, and method of recruitment. Often, community providers will offer the PDE classes according to court mandates.

Psychoeducation: A learning experience that prepares for significant life transitions and facilitates acquisition of the skills needed to face the challenge (Trad, 1991). In the context of this study, PDE is a psychoeducational program serving a public and mental health role in the family dissolution process. In a short-term psychoeducational PDE class, the didactics are presented to be directive in approaching lifestyle choices and co-parenting skills to increase parent care, as well as overall child adjustment.

Parenting plan (custody or visitation schedule/agreements): The amount of time the child spends with each parent “to optimize the child’s exposure to each parent’s resources” (Mahrer et al., 2016). In the New York State Unified Court System, this can be documented through a 12-page form that outlines the allocation of child custody, including weekly visitation, holidays, birthdays, and academic breaks. The parenting plan is a legal document that stipulates agreements regarding a parent’s role in (a) decision-making for the child (e.g., medical care, well-being, education), (b) standards of communication/information sharing pertaining to the child, (c) relocation of a parent, and (d) rules for custody/visitation exchanges.

Parental alienation: First proposed as a syndrome by Richard Gardner in 1992, when he identified an irrational “campaign of denigration” against a target parent that results in the child’s ostracizing and vilifying the target parent’s actions (Gardner, 1998). The alienation occurs with the rejection of the target parent, leaving the child “brain-washed” and isolated from a relationship with this target parent (Clawar & Rivlin, 1991).

Parental gatekeeping: How one parent’s attitudes and actions affect the involvement and quality of the relationship between the other parent and child. A gatekeeping parent can be restrictive or facilitative in the context of co-parenting (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

Parenting style: Baumrind (1971, 1991) categorized four styles of parenting through two orthogonal dimensions (control and warmth). *Parental control* or demandingness is the level to which parents are involved in organizing and managing a child’s behavior. *Parental warmth* or sensitivity is the parent’s level of responsiveness to the child’s behavior or needs. Parents are classified as high or low on control and

warmth, creating the quadrant of parenting styles: (a) *permissive/indulgent* (low control, high warmth), (b) *authoritarian* (high control, low warmth), (c) *authoritative* (high control, high warmth), and (d) *negligent/uninvolved* (low control, low warmth). Parenting style is a product of patterns related to parenting practices, cultural values, and behaviors children enact (Baumrind, 1971). The optimal use of control and warmth is captured by the authoritative parenting style.

Parenting satisfaction: Parents' perception of their feelings related to the role of parent or the degree of anxiety, frustration, or motivation they experience while meeting the demands of caring for their child(ren). Satisfaction can be regarded as the quality of affect and benefit a parent engenders while managing the time commitment, energy, cognitive demands, and emotional regulation required by parenting (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Rogers & Matthews, 2004).

Parenting efficacy (or parenting self-efficacy): A parent's ability to execute their role as parent and manage the responsibilities of parenting (Bondy & Mash, 1999). Assessments of parental efficacy typically measure the construct through parents' self-reports of their own perceived level of competence and confidence in employing a plan of action for successful parenting rather than by evaluating observed parenting skills.

Co-parenting: The relationship quality and support guardians provide for each other in raising children. Co-parenting has been defined as the communication and organization underpinning the relational process of child-centered parental interactions (Belsky, Crnic, & Woodworth, 1995; McHale, 2007). Co-parenting involves all adults in a family system participating in the daily management of a child.

Resilience: Strategies and abilities utilized in response to extraordinary challenges or risks to adaptation. Resilience can be defined as the framework for *surviving* (i.e., achieving normal development) or *thriving* (i.e., achieving high functioning) in the face of adversity, extreme stress, and trauma (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Nishikawa, 2006).

Triangulation: Any third party added to a dyadic conflict (e.g., Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974). In the context of divorce, the family system can be fractured into dysfunctional alliances. Triangulation most often occurs when children are drawn into the adversarial interparental interactions or communication patterns and feel “caught in the middle.” Triangulation is coercive and damaging as children are used as pawns in interparental conflict.

Significance of the Study

PDE programs spread rapidly throughout the 1990s, with the number of programs tripling between 1994 and 1998 (Geasler & Blaisure, 1999). With the rapid proliferation of PDE programs, research and evaluation have lagged behind. Thus, most PDE classes were developed without rigorous evaluation to support the design or implementation (Prescott, 2014). Studies of PDE program efficacy, nonetheless, peaked in the early 2000s, with a number of programs implementing multi-method and randomized control trial designs in an effort to produce evidence to establish best practices for interventions (Salem et al., 2013). New York State’s brief PDE program has not been evaluated for efficacy since Shepard in 2000 (assessing the P.E.A.C.E program) and Pedro-Carroll, Nakhnikian, and Montes in 2001 (assessing the A.C.T. program), and there has never been a formal evaluation with the current PEAP curriculum. Overall, the origination of PDE

evaluations are trickling to a halt, as more than 70% of studies in the two most recent reviews of the literature (Fackrell et al., 2011; Sigal et al., 2011) were published before 2003.

This study attempted to address a mounting decline in the pursuit of evidence to support PDEs and validate the current certified PEAP program design. FamilyKind can potentially utilize the results of this study to evaluate New York State PEAP. If effective, this psychoeducational intervention could become mandated by the state for parents embarking on divorce or mediation and child custody litigation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States, between 40% and 50% of first marriages are projected to end in divorce (Cherlin, 2010). Twenty percent of marital unions result in separation or divorce by the fifth anniversary, with 33% dissolved within 10 years, and 43% within 15 years (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Reviews of the research on divorce have consistently found that children who experience divorce have a higher incidence of mental health, substance abuse, academic, and social problems than their peers from intact families (Amato, 2000; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). The family dissolution and separation process is associated with instability, conflict, and financial strain (Braver & Lamb, 2012). Most research on divorce derives from three seminal studies dating back to the 1970s: (a) the Marin County Project, (b) the Virginia Study, and (c) the Binuclear Family Study (Ahrns, 2007).

The Origins of Divorce Research

Although the literature on divorce has become extensive over the last 45 years, the theoretical framework of most studies continues to follow the perspectives of the three researchers who studied the longitudinal effects of divorce beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Wallerstein's Marin County Project, Hetherington's Virginia Study, and Ahrns's Binuclear Family Study forged distinct approaches to longitudinally assess fam-

ily outcomes beyond the marital dissolution process. These three studies followed parents and children to determine the long-term effects of divorce using various designs, theoretical frameworks, and samples.

The Marin County Project

The Marin County Project or California Children of Divorce Study dates back to 1971, when 60 families (131 children between the ages of 3 and 18) were followed for 25 years, with in-depth interviews collected in 5-year increments by clinical psychologists, Judith Wallerstein and Joan Kelly. The families followed were seeking psychological services and, therefore, the sample was skewed toward a clinical population. Wallerstein's work was mostly anecdotal, collecting the narratives of interviews into case studies while presenting long-term statistics on outcomes (e.g., age at time of marriage or education level achieved for children of divorce in adulthood) of the children of divorce. The final follow-up reported the findings of 93 adult children of divorce, specifically focusing on the victimization and psychological suffering that these participants endured more than 25 years after the trauma of their parents' divorce (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000).

Hetherington's Virginia Study

E. Mavis Hetherington began her research in the 1960s looking at single-parent homes and commenced the Virginia Study (or Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage) in 1972 to evaluate long-term outcomes related to marriage and divorce. She initially followed 144 families (72 divorced, 72 intact) with at least one child aged 4; however, her sample eventually expanded to 450 families with 900 children at the 20-year follow-up, which included divorced, intact, and remarried families (Hetherington &

Kelly, 2002). The assessments utilized multiple measures, control groups, and a multi-method format over the course of 20 years. The findings of the Virginia Study were varied and complex across the two decades of follow-up with a general conclusion that the majority of children of divorce displayed no significant differences from intact, single-parent, or step/remarried families. However, the children of divorce were found to be at higher risk for negative outcomes, notably 75% of the women and two thirds of the men reported strained relationships with their fathers in adulthood (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Hetherington observed the 2-year period post-divorce as the most problematic, with well-being generally increasing thereafter (Hetherington, 1992). The findings of the Virginia Study identified conflict as a significant risk factor associated with poorer outcomes for children raised in both divorced and intact homes. Hetherington theorized that through the divorce process, the disruptive changes and relational difficulties often lead to increased stressful circumstances, which increase conflict between parents and negatively affect child adjustment and relationship quality between parents and children (Hetherington, 1992).

The Binuclear Family Study

The Binuclear Family Study began in 1979, whereby researchers interviewed 98 divorced former couples (196 parents in total) solicited from court records in Dane County, Wisconsin. The assessments were administered in 1-, 3-, and 5-year follow-up waves, including the new partners of the original participants (through remarriage or cohabitation) in the second and third waves. Constance Ahrons designed the Binuclear Family Study using the Marin County Study and Virginia Study as models, employing semi-structured interviews and multimodal assessments to evaluate co-parenting and

complex post-divorce family systems. The fourth and final wave of the study was the 20-year follow-up, which focused on the children of divorce (173 children from 89 of the original families) who were adults at the time of follow-up. Ahrons found fathers' involvement in their children's lives to be highly associated with the relationship between parents, citing conflict as a moderator. Upon interview, fathers who described mostly supportive and low-conflict interactions with their former spouse had a high likelihood of being a part of their children's lives 5 years post-divorce (Ahrons & Miller, 1993). This finding was profound, as it informed Constance Ahrons's pursuit of the "good divorce," as she sought to define the parameters of co-parenting that could optimize child outcomes in the reorganized binuclear family (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Studies

Although all three longitudinal studies on divorce contained strengths and weaknesses, each proffered a framework for understanding the family organization after marital dissolution. Each researcher's underlying assumptions created a discrete model of interpreting the complex parent-child interactions and outcomes related to divorce. As interpreted by Wallerstein, the Marin County Study reflected a pathological model of divorce, which is understood to increase likelihood of emotional distress, pathology, relationship difficulties, and reduced achievement in the domains of education as well as employment. With the Virginia Study, Hetherington imparted a risk-to-resilience model. Hetherington assessed the deficits and negative outcomes in comparison to intact families; however, her analysis determined that the majority of children of divorce fall within the average range of functioning. Hetherington's findings thus reinforced the resilience

perspective, with children adapting to the sequelae of divorce without long-term adjustment problems and demonstrating similar outcomes to peers of intact families.

The Binuclear Study fits into a normative model, in which Ahrons examined within-group comparisons to integrate data from all parties involved (e.g., siblings, step-parents) in the family restructuring after divorce. Ahrons attempted to ascribe a social norm to the concept of divorce (“the good divorce”) using children’s retrospective reflections on their parents’ relationships. She used her findings to support a categorization of relational archetypes that represented a continuum of co-parenting from more to less functional (i.e., Perfect Pals, Cooperative Colleagues, Angry Associates, Fiery Foes, and Dissolved Duos). Ahrons presented evidence that cooperative co-parenting provided the post-divorce families organizing principles to help accommodate varied family systems (e.g., step-families and cohabiting partners) in the promotion of normative child outcomes (Ahrons & Tanner, 2003).

Although the pioneering longitudinal studies on divorce laid a foundation for conceptualizing divorce through different models of interpretation, the reported findings were relatively similar. The majority (75–80%) of children assessed reported limited long-term damage in functioning as adults (Amato, Kane, & James, 2011). In addition, most children and parents (approximately 70%) had reduced negative outcomes 2 years after family dissolution, with most adults endorsing a happier life post-divorce. Additionally, the results converge on the complexity of identifying mechanisms that moderate risk factors and mitigate negative outcomes post-divorce. The main consensus was that parent conflict and supportive communication moderated children’s well-being throughout their development. Better parent relationships mitigate loyalty conflicts, withholding

of resources, and communication impasses that cause every member of the family system distress and varied negative outcomes.

Risk Factors Related to Divorce

A variety of factors related to increased likelihood for divorce, including: (a) age at time of marriage, (b) level of education (c) racial/ethnic background, (d) income, (e) level of religiosity, and (f) marital history of parents. Epidemiologic studies have also associated the incidence of divorce with community attributes, such as (a) local crime rates, (b) unemployment levels, and (c) proximity to areas with concentrations of high poverty (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). There have been mixed findings related to demographics and risk of divorce, underscoring the complexity of protective factors for marriage and the importance of accounting for interactions between variables when determining risk. Many studies define terms differently and are plagued with inconsistencies, as samples remain non-representative creating conflicting findings due to weak measures and small samples with high selection bias as well as homogeneity (Sigal et al., 2011).

Marital Age

The age of first marriage has been steadily increasing with the age of divorce since the late 1970s. In 2015, the median age at first divorce for men was 41.2 years and 39.7 years for women, which is the result of 45 years of steady increase (Anderson, 2016). Bramlett and Mosher (2002) analyzed the data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth interviews, with 10,847 women aged 14 to 55, and reported the following: Approximately half (48%) of the women entering a first marriage before age 18 were divorced before their 10th anniversary, while only 24% of women marrying after age 25 were reported being divorced before 10 years of marriage. Marriage prior to age 25 may

be subject to individual immaturities and limited skills or experience to meet marital expectations. Compounding the risk for marriage at a younger age is the greater availability of potential partners when a first marriage is ended before age 30, which may increase spouse's likelihood of exiting a modestly satisfying marriage (Lehrer, 2008).

Education Level

Additionally, education has been consistently found to moderate the likelihood for divorce (Boertien, von Sheve, & Park, 2015). Bramlett and Mosher (2002) found a 48% divorce rate prior to 10 years of marriage for White (non-Hispanic) women with less than a high school education; this decreases to a 27% divorce rate in those with some higher education or a completed degree. However, among Hispanic women, the relationship between divorce and education was reversed in the National Survey of Family Growth sample. Twenty-nine percent of Hispanic women never completing high school had ended their marriage before 10 years, as opposed to 39% of those with some higher education or a completed degree (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Additionally, Stevenson and Wolfers (2007) found college education even more protective, as only 11% of those with higher education that wed in the early 2000s divorced before 7 years. It is difficult to determine how education influences the likelihood of divorce because the relationship appears to be confounded by motivation or expectation for marriage and other factors, including personality traits, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and race (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007).

Demographers, more than psychologists, have studied divorce and identified the relationship between low education and higher incidences of divorce (Amato, 2010; Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006). A compelling thesis has been proposed in many studies, which associates lower education with poorer quality interactions between spouses or

what might be characterized as less insight and problem solving (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Bracher, Santow, Morgan, & Trussell, 1993; Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010; Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006; Jalovaara, 2001, 2013; Matysiak, Styrac, & Vignoli, 2013; Teachman, 2002). One study by Amato and Rogers (1997) found that education level mitigated levels of substance abuse, jealousy, and infidelity (all societal rule-following behaviors), but did not affect personal traits such as high mood variability, irresponsible spending habits, or irritating behavior. The reductions in substance abuse, which is highly associated with domestic violence, and infidelity greatly influence the incidence of divorce as these factors (infidelity, substance abuse and domestic violence) are consistently cited as top reasons for divorce (Scott, Rhoades, Stanley, Allen, & Markman, 2013). However, there can be no definitive conclusions made, as these findings can also be explained by low relationship quality and the stress associated with lower economic status or poor education.

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity or cultural factors are further associated with varied outcomes and highly associated with socioeconomic status. After being married for 10 years, the incidence of divorce is 47% for African American women, 32% for White (non-Hispanic) women, and drops to 20% for Asian American women (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Additionally, Bramlett and Mosher (2002) found that African American and Hispanic women have an increased likelihood of remaining separated rather than legally divorcing, as compared to White (non-Hispanic) women. Within 5 years of separation, 97% of White (non-Hispanic) women have completed a legal divorce, compared to 67% of African American woman and 77% of Hispanic women. Although the direction of causation

cannot be determined by recent research, race and culture are important factors in assessing risk for divorce. The interaction of race, culture, socioeconomic status, and additional factors must be further explored in the data, as directional influence will better inform mediational models and intervention design (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

Socioeconomic Status

Any analysis of risk factors for divorce requires controlling for socioeconomic factors, which becomes complicated as financial status often changes during the divorce process. Income is highly associated with divorce and may better account for variations in divorce rates than risk attributed to gender, ethnicity, or other demographic variables. As controlling for socioeconomic status is often imprecise, demographic factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity) may yield effects that are merely capturing the residual impact of socioeconomic differences (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001). At present, it remains unclear to what degree race/ ethnicity, educational attainment, and religiosity/religious affiliation influence the incidence of divorce or are actually proxy indicators for financial imbalances (Amato, 2010; Bratter & King, 2008).

Personality

Divorce rates are also related to relational constructs, patterns of interaction, and personality traits of the individuals electing to marry. John Gottman (1993) and other divorce researchers have found that couples that engage in high levels of blame, contempt, stonewalling, negative affect, disengagement, denial, or emotional avoidance experience higher divorce rates (Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Hetherington, 1999b; Hetherington &

Kelly, 2002). Similarly, married couples with differing perspectives on family management, few shared interests, and limited overlap in their social networks (Hetherington, 1999b; Notarius & Vanzetti, 1983), as well as minimal cooperative engagement, are at increased risk for divorce (Rogers, 2004). Men are particularly likely to report that sexual dissatisfaction contributes to marriage instability and initiation of divorce, with White (non-Hispanic) men reporting this more frequently than African American men (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Orbuch, Veroff, & Hunter, 1999). Many of these patterns and traits that increase chances of divorce precede marriage and represent longstanding attachment, relational, or communication styles that complicate the predictive validity of aforementioned risk factors (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995).

Mental Health

Further, higher risk for divorce is associated with pre-existing mental health problems or personal maladjustment, such as impulsivity, depression, alcohol or substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. Marriages where either spouse has a history of psychopathology or maladaptive behaviors, involve an increased likelihood of: stress, relational distress, and domestic violence, as well as divorce and inadequate parenting practices (Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; Hetherington, 1999b; Kitson, 1992; Kurdek, 1990). Antisocial personality traits, often resulting in criminality and choosing an antisocial partner, are cited as the psychopathology with greatest risk for divorce. These marriages suffer relationship difficulties, separation due to incarceration, and additional co-morbid mental health issues in both spouses, which promote high divorce rates (Amato, 2000; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Finally, couples parenting children with special needs, mental health diagnoses, and difficult childhood temperaments, there are a myriad of increased risks related to divorce. Special needs children may require an unusually high level of targeted intervention from parents and time-consuming interactions with multiple service providers, which place high levels of stress on the parental relationship, resulting in marital dissolution or separation. Wymbs et al. (2008) found an 80% greater likelihood of divorce in parents of children diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by age 8 than parents of children without the diagnosis (22.7% vs. 12.6%).

In a similar study, Hartley et al. (2010) found that parents of children with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) had a 70% increased likelihood of divorce when compared to a control group (23.5% vs. 13.8%). In addition, the Wymbs et al. (2008) study revealed that when parents did divorce, there was a shorter term of marriage in the parents of children with ADHD as compared to the control cohort. Moreover, the difficulties related to mental health, educational, and medical decision-making may increase exponentially after divorce, often fostering conflict and acrimony in parents throughout their children's lives (Heckel, Clarke, Barry, McDCarthy, & Selikowitz, 2009). Kasen, Cohen, Brook, and Hartmark (1996) conducted a study of 648 children beginning at an age between 1 and 10 and following up 8 years later, finding child temperament and family structure to have significant interactions predictive of post-divorce adjustment. The researchers performed logistical regressions on the cohort, noting an increased risk of oppositional defiant disorder, major depressive disorder, and pediatric anxiety in children with early emotional disturbances who are living in single parent or stepfamily environments after divorce. Furthermore, the addition of many stressors to these children's lives

and emotional upheaval of divorce resulted in an increased incidence of externalizing and internalizing behaviors in the group of vulnerable or more reactive children.

It is important to note the complexity and contradiction in the research in every risk factor related to divorce. One recent analysis by Freedman, Kalb, Zablotsky, and Stuart (2010) found that 64% of parents maintained intact families while having a child with an ASD diagnosis. This was commensurate with 65% of married parents in the matched control group from families with typically developing children and did not show increased risk of divorce when having a child with an ASD diagnosis. In sum, the mechanisms and hypotheses that moderate outcomes remain unsupported when findings related to risk are so varied.

Effects Related to Parents' Adjustment After Divorce

Although not all changes post-divorce are problematic, divorce is described as one of the most stressful life events experienced by adults and can be related to numerous negative outcomes (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Previously mentioned influential factors, including financial status, gender differences, marriage quality prior to separation, social support, and children, have consistently been studied to determine their function as protective factors or their association with negative effects (Overbeek et al., 2006; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). Key findings have emerged from the literature supporting psychological functioning to be highly influenced by marital quality (Hagedoorn et al., 2006; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). For example, Overbeek et al. (2006) analyzed data from a 4,796-person epidemiological study of adults in the Netherlands, finding that dysthymia and alcohol use significantly increased in women and men over 2 years post-divorce; however, this effect was not significant with the dissolution of low-quality marriages.

This highlights the notion that effects on parent's after divorce must be assessed based on pre-dissolution marital quality. As has been shown by Hawkins and Booth (2005), mental health difficulties are reported to be significantly weaker when ending an unbalanced or disappointing marriage. They asserted

“Unhappily married people may have greater odds of improving their well-being by dissolving their low-quality unions as there is no evidence that they are better off in any aspect of overall well-being than those who divorce” (Hawkins & Booth, 2005, p. 455).

Mental Health

In another study, Williams and Dunne-Bryant (2006) found the dissolution process with children to involve more stress (related to parenting) and associated with lengthy divorce proceedings, as well as increased conflict. Their findings showed depression was greater in divorcing parents, specifically occurring at a 3 times greater rate with children under age 6 in comparison to those ending a marriage without children. In men, alcohol abuse was consistently reported with increased frequency (regardless of other factors) during the marriage dissolution process, while women only reported increased alcohol abuse with young children (under age 6). As alcohol abuse increases with stress, it can be posited that the majority of divorced mothers with young children have mounting stressors related single-parenting responsibilities and a higher frequency of interactions with their former spouse. Additionally, research has shown that exposure to depression and substance use in a parent negatively affect children's psychological functioning

and emotional well-being (Amato & Anthony, 2014), compromising their ability to provide a secure or consistent living arrangement and foster healthy relationships with children.

Physical Health

Recent divorce research focuses on risk factors related to physical health (Sbarra, 2015). Divorce has been associated with increased risk of heart disease (Zhang & Hayward, 2006) or high blood pressure (Sbarra, Law, Lee, & Mason, 2009), immunodeficiency (Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002), and chronic poor health and motor impairments (Hughes & Waite, 2009). The period after divorce or separation has repeatedly been associated with increased alcohol and drug use, psychopathology, auto accidents, suicide, alcoholism, and early death (see Amato, 2000, for an extensive review of findings). In addition, there are even correlations between frequency of homicide in a community and the prevalence of separation/divorce (Schwartz, 2006). However, the direction of the relationships between environmental stress, relational distress, and marital dissatisfaction remains undetermined (Sbarra, Hasselmo, & Bourassa, 2015).

Economic Impact

Financial burdens can cause stress and are often unequally distributed among divorcing spouses. In national samples of divorcing couples, it has been found that household income can be reduced by 13 to 35% for the residential parent (Cherlin, 1998; Peterson, 1996). In 1991, Teachman and Paasch warned of the economic consequences of divorce, reporting from the U.S. Census Bureau that 39% of divorced women with children under the age of 18 and 55% with children under the age of 6 lived below the poverty line (Teachman & Paasch, 1994). Furthermore, stress mounts as parents are forced to change

employment, transition children to new schools, and move residences in response to declines in household income post-divorce (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 1999; Forgatch, Patterson, & Ray, 1996; Lorenz et al., 1997; McLanahan, 1999; Patterson & Forgatch, 1990). In general, while self-reported post-divorce distress typically diminishes over time (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 1997; Forgatch et al., 1996; Hetherington, 1993; Lorenz et al., 1997), lowered post-divorce incomes may create a series of disruptive life events (e.g., relocating, lifestyle changes, debt) that maintain unrelenting financial stress over many years. It has been shown that possessing emotional support and close social relationships moderates the negative outcomes related to economic distress within the family and overall adjustment after divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Simons & Johnson, 1996).

Outcomes Related to Children's Adjustment After Divorce

Similar to that in adults, the evidence for problematic effects in children after divorce is also varied. Paul Amato (2010) addressed the many conflicting findings related to child adjustment after divorce through his multiple meta-analyses (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991a, 1991b), which have shown that approximately 15 to 25% of children from divorced families have significant behavioral problems or negative outcomes, in contrast to 10–15% of children from two-parent families. Therefore, the thesis that Amato, Kane, and James (2011), put forth in *Reconsidering the Good Divorce* is that there is a minimal amount of variance (approximately 10%) that separates children of divorce from their peers without the experience of divorce, leaving research that focuses on outcomes with little room for powerful effects and causal determinations.

Negative Outcomes

Nonetheless, there are over four decades of research examining children's outcomes post-divorce. Most findings suggest that children of divorce experience significant negative outcomes (Amato, 2000, 2001; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992; McLanahan, 1999; Simons & Johnson 1996). Notably, Amato and Keith's (1991b) initial meta-analysis reported negative effects on children of divorce including: (a) less life satisfaction, (b) increased depression, (c) diminished levels of educational achievement, and (d) poorer physical health. Children of divorce have been reported to be more aggressive, impulsive, prone to antisocial behaviors, and relational problems. Studies found children of divorce more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, use illegal drugs, experience teen pregnancy, marry young, and divorce as adults (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000; Caspi, Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; Hetherington, 1999a). Further meta-analyses found less support for higher likelihood of negative outcomes in children of divorce, however consistently found significant findings related to poor adjustment in children of divorce versus intact families across at all developmental stages (Amato, 2000; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000; Grych, 2005; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006). The most persistent narrative experienced by children of divorce involves confusion, anger, and anxiety at the outset of their parents' separation regardless of the level conflict between parents (Bonds et al., 2010). In general, the divorce literature appears to be vulnerable to vast attribution errors, limited causal conclusions, contradictory evidence and poor replication when assessing negative outcomes in children of divorce; moreover, continued inadequate appraisals of emotional effects (Amato, Kane, James, 2011).

As previously discussed, there is competing evidence in the effects of divorce on child outcomes. Children often respond differently to exposure to the same risk factors as their parents and children typically experience limited control over the changes to which they are subjected. Throughout the family restructuring process post-divorce, children remain vulnerable to increased environmental stress directly related to the changes in their lives and their parents' relationship (Dunn, Davies, O'Connor, & Sturgess, 2001). For example, Wolchik et al. (2002) found that children reared by parents demonstrating low warmth and low consistency (negligent or uninvolved parenting style) post-divorce displayed more significant internalizing and externalizing problems as compared to peers. Amato and Booth (1997) reported even children from low-conflict families have increased reports of emotional distress or impaired resilience post-divorce associated with the loss of availability of parents (Amato & Booth, 1997). Similarly, children with high-conflict home environments were reported to experience worsening outcomes when contact with the father remained high after divorce (Amato & Reznac, 1994; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989). Moreover, Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, and McRae (1998) found that interparental conflict accounts for 50% of the variance in children's problematic outcomes related to divorce. However, it must be noted that Bonds and colleagues (2010) followed up after 6 years with a randomly controlled sample of 240 children of divorce who completed the New Beginnings Program (NBP), a family-based intervention, and found every respondent reported experiencing some form of confusion, anger, or anxiety at the outset of their parents' separation regardless of the level conflict between parents or long-term outcome (Bonds et al., 2010). Children's reaction to divorce is thus highly mediated by

risk and resilience factors found in the family system and requires some form of intervention (e.g., formal or informal) to process the experience.

Positive Outcomes

Notably, there are children who report significant positive changes in well-being after their parents' divorce, resulting from the reduction in exposure to conflict, violence, and trauma (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Booth & Amato, 2001; Emery, 2009; Jekielek, 1998; Strohschein, 2005). In families with low conflict, better adjustment outcomes for children are found when high contact is maintained with the father or non-residential parent. Additionally, children whose parents were reported to maintain high warmth and consistent discipline (or control) in the parenting role (authoritative parenting style) displayed the least internalizing and externalizing problems (Wolchik et al., 2002). It is notable that the distribution of outcomes between the children from divorced versus non-divorced families contain substantial common variance. Amato and Gilbreth's 1999 meta-analysis identified a formidable number of children of divorce (i.e., approximately 40%) with similar or better post-divorce adjustment than their counterparts from intact families. Over time, more recent reviews of divorce research estimate that 45–65% of the greater population of children with divorced parents show significant resilience with no demonstrated negative outcomes that can be attributed to divorce (Amato, 2010). Taken all together, divorce effects children with varied directionality as the changes post-divorce vary for each family system in magnitude and frequency.

Longer-Term Post-Divorce Outcomes for Children

Research has indicated that post-divorce adjustment issues for children are significantly varied, with some problems being short-lived while others remain persistent into

adulthood. Past long-term studies (e.g., Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi, 1987; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982) have found evidence for children of divorce exhibiting resilience or adaptive functioning, as reported problems significantly diminish in frequency over the 2 years following divorce. Many longitudinal studies assessing post-divorce outcomes have revealed limited negative effects, as post-divorce arrangements produce more stable conditions for most children (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990). Moreover, Emery (1999) found that most children functioned in the normal range post-divorce, with the majority of parents reporting subclinical behavioral problems and emotional distress in children after divorce. Additionally, Hetherington et al. (1989) found children with positive attributes such as attractiveness, easy-going temperament, and high social skills proficiency demonstrated higher levels of resiliency post-divorce. These children were more likely to have attracted caring concern from others and extra-familial support systems (e.g., peers and community). The argument that family dissolution has moderate effects continues in the literature, as the majority of families of divorce do not contain high school dropouts or teen (unwed) pregnancy, although there is an increased association with these negative markers relative to two-parent families (Emery, 1999; Greene Anderson, Hetherington, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2003, Marquardt, 2005).

In contrast to the above findings supporting relatively benign long-term effects of divorce on children, there is a rich body of research that demonstrates negative and persistent effects of divorce. As previously noted, Wallerstein and Lewis's (1998) longitudinal follow-up of the Marin County cohort, which utilized semi-structured interviews with children of divorce, found a higher risk for negative outcomes when children believed

that they caused the divorce or held vivid painful memories of their parents' physical separation (Wallerstein & Lewis, 1998). Cherlin et al. (1991) followed 17,414 individuals in the United Kingdom from age 7 to 33 through repeated administrations of the Malaise Inventory to assess psychological disorders; 11% of participants who had been children of divorce fell within the clinical range as young adults (at age 23), compared to 8% of young adults (at age 23) who had not experienced their parents' divorce (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan 1995). Additionally, Rodgers, Power, and Hope (1997) found that at age 33, this same cohort was 85% more likely to report mental health difficulties as the adjustment gap between individuals whose parents divorced and those who had not experienced parental divorce widened over time.

Further, longitudinal analyses found that children of divorce maintained difficulties in home and academic settings 4 - 6 years post-divorce irrespective of gender (Hetherington et al., 1992). Hetherington (1993) reported at the 15-year follow-up of her longitudinal Virginia study that boys who had experienced divorce as toddlers reported significant elevations in problematic externalizing behaviors well into their adolescent years, as compared to the children in the control group from non-divorced families. Confirming Wallerstein's (2004) findings, Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2008) found that women reared by divorced parents maintain negative expectations regarding their own romantic relationships and marriage. Other negative impacts reported by the female children of divorce include diminished commitment to relationships and lowered confidence in relationships, even after controlling for a history of parental conflict and present relationship satisfaction (Whitton et al., 2008). Notably, evidence has shown that when a child of divorce later chooses a stable and supportive life partner from an intact family,

the effects of marital instability are all but eliminated (Hetherington, 1999b; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Much analysis focuses on children of divorce in adolescence, as during this formative and vulnerable developmental stage many long-term negative outcomes begin to present in response to previous disruptions in the family system, especially for teen girls (e.g., Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995). In Hetherington's longitudinal sample, for example, girls from divorced families had a higher rate of early-onset puberty than girls from intact families. Further, teenage girls who experienced early-onset puberty and had decreased parental monitoring, older peer friends, and a mother who was actively dating after their parents' divorce were at increased risk to experiment with sexual activities earlier, have more sexual partners, and experience higher rates of teen pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted infections than their peers (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Nonetheless, Risch, Jodl, and Eccles (2004) found some resilient effects related to gender—namely, that adolescent boys who maintained close relationships with their fathers post-divorce later reported less anxiety associated with their own future marriages ending in divorce.

When assessing long-term outcomes, some researchers have found that difficulties may not originate post-divorce, but are better accounted for by longstanding adverse conditions in the family system. For example, Strohschein (2005) retrospectively documented results that showed a higher incidence of antisocial behaviors, anxiety, and depression in children from divorcing families prior to their parents' divorce. Similarly, Sun and Li (2002) analyzed a longitudinal dataset from a nationally representative sample

and found lower test scores for children of divorce 3 years preceding their family dissolution, with compounded decreases in performance after the divorce. Earlier studies also revealed that pre-existing vulnerabilities and negative conditions pre-divorce account for a significant proportion of the variance in outcomes measured post-divorce (see Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1986; Chase-Lansdale, Wakschlag, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995 for a review). The pre-existing conditions of the family and mediating factors consistently confound behaviors that are attributed to divorce. For example, it remains unknown if a child of divorce who suffers depression in adolescence would have had that same depressive symptomatology had their family remained intact (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). Furthermore, many factors influence how the divorce is framed and, therefore, the resulting feelings in children. For example, when children were given the opportunity to voice their opinions regarding living arrangements or custody agreements post-divorce, they reported fewer negative memories and more positive feelings related to their family's dissolution (Dunn et al., 2001). Additionally, many studies have identified that divorce research has been ineffective in establishing significant factors related to risk and resilience and how they affect children. The research has limited findings that account for child temperament (e.g., Hetherington, 1991) or the stressors that interact to impair resilience post-divorce (Emery, 1999). Marquardt's (2005) study of young adults from divorced family systems used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to yield data with few respondents in this study having a psychiatric diagnosis, an arrest record, or a nonmarital birth. However, many respondents endorsed or described being subject to parentification (e.g., child relied on practically or emotionally in the role parent/former spouse), feelings of isolation, stress reactions around birthdays and holidays, feelings of less safety without

both parents, missing the non-residential parent, and feelings of being “torn between” their mothers’ and fathers’ homes. Generally, this suggests that standardized measures of well-being poorly account for the nuanced and subtle ramifications of divorce on children.

Divorce Stigma and Outcomes for Children Post-Divorce

Much early literature focused on children of divorce has been biased, assuming divorce was a “trauma” and “a devastating upheaval” resulting in overwhelming grief and loss for those children affected (Landis, 1960). The stigma of divorce has been connected to religious constructs and gender roles, with divorce researchers framing self-report measures or interview questions with the assumption that women and children are victims and that the family has been depicted as “torn apart” (Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987). Recent research has attempted to address the biases of self-report measures of divorce by analyzing the attribution errors and level of social desirability in self-report data while controlling for factors in the family system that precede divorce (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Strohschein, 2005). Two key biases have been hypothesized in parent and child self-report: (a) When defensive of their parenting practices, parents report more positive outcomes or higher functioning in their children, and (b) when reflecting on their feelings of loss from divorce, respondents endorse emotional distress (mental health concerns), as well as negative outcomes at a higher rate. However, both the cross-sectional and longitudinal research may only reflect a state-based appraisal of one moment in time, rather than accurately measuring the child’s functioning in response to their parent’s divorce over time (Amato, 1995).

Obstacles for families post-divorce change over time with emotional pain and relational difficulties surfacing later in life. Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000), for example, surveyed young adults in their early 20s who reported more pain and distress over their parents' divorces 10 years later, with the greatest negative feelings related to a loss of relationship with their fathers. In addition, the researchers found that those young adults who reported high interparental conflict in their childhood homes (10 years prior) were even more likely to have feelings of loss and regret related to their parents' divorce. These findings contradict the majority of research conducted the immediate years after the divorce process is completed (which suggests decreases in internalizing and externalizing behaviors in children of divorce); Laumann-Billings and Emery captured the distinction between resilience and relief. Two years after divorce, parents and children report improvements in functioning as stress from the family dissolution subsides. However, psychological pain resulting from family dissolution and emotional distress may surface in more indirect ways that may not be attributed to the divorce (Amato, 2010; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). In this way, the complexity of post-divorce outcomes for children reflects many of the dysfunctional patterns of the former family system.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the emerging body of research examining divorce in relation to gender (e.g., same-sex marriages), non-traditional parental rights (e.g., parenthood by "intent"), increasing age of first marriages, and factors of self-selection (see Schoen & Cheng, 2006). In the last decade, the divorce rate has decreased steadily, along with an increase in cohabitating non-married partners, lowering the probability of divorce in recent marriages (Cherlin, 2010). In addition, the diffusion of typical

gender roles and a societal push for gender equality in heterosexual parenting partnerships has contributed to increased rates of child support compliance and non-custodial contact (Wharton, 2012). These major shifts in the structuring of family, parenthood, and ultimately divorce present undetermined mitigating factors that add further confounds in studying the effects of family dissolution on children (Nadeau, 2001).

Effects on Relationships of Divorcing Families Spousal Relationships Post-Divorce

Following divorce, the process of re-organization of spousal or partner relationships involves many variables that must be negotiated, including the resolution of emotional attachment, residual conflict, and amount of physical contact (e.g., custody or visitation). Results of demographic analyses show that men are more likely to report persisting emotional attachment and a greater possibility of reconciliation than women after separation and divorce. Ironically, men remarry in a shorter time period (within 2–4 years) than women following divorce. In situations where men remarry quickly, ex-spouses endorsed feelings of resentment, anger, and active competitiveness toward their ex-husband's new partner (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Further, in such divorces women were more likely to have been victims of physical intimate partner abuse in the period directly preceding divorce and during the initial period of separation. These women were found to have increased risk when they initiated the separation and completed the divorce. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) discussed in their retrospective on the Virginia Study that it was found the majority of divorced individuals (men and women) reported “moving on” after 6 years. In addition, at this 6-year follow-up point the same majority of former husbands and wives endorsed reasonable life satisfaction and an absence of intense emotion associated with their divorce.

On the other hand, other research finds that conflict extends long after divorce, mostly associated with disputes over custody, parenting practices, or factors requiring former partners to remain connected (e.g., financial, business, or social affiliations; Fischer, De Graaf, & Kalmijn, 2005; Kalmijn & Monden, 2006). On average, close to 25% of former spouses exhibit sustained or even increased conflict pertaining to financial matters and parenting decisions (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1996; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Tschann, Johnson, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1990). Further, children often report an experience of being “caught” or “stuck in the middle” of their parents’ deteriorating relationship and thus, psychological triangulation can lead children to blame themselves for parental conflict. Hetherington (1999a) found that boys more frequently react to this experience by being oppositional, displaying anger, and acting out, while girls frequently respond with increased anxiety and guilt.

The prevailing consensus has been that the reorganization of a family system post-divorce would ideally involve minimized conflict among parents and a cooperative set of parameters (e.g., a parenting plan) that supports each parent’s role in the child(ren)’s life (Difonzo, 2014). The best estimates have found that only 25% of families pursuing dissolution achieve a cooperative plan and avoid contentious legal ensnarement. Over the divorce process, most parents become disconnected at a level that allows for arrangements that can be better described as “functional parallel parenting” (e.g., with minimal collaboration and strained communication) as opposed to effective co-parenting. While less ideal than effective co-parenting, communication often remains civil and invested in the interest of the child and may respond to intervention with increased co-par-

enting strategies (Ahrons, 2011; Buchanan et al., 1996; Hetherington, 1999a; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). It is thus clear that children benefit both from positive relationships between their parents and with their parents (King, 1994; Kelly, 2007). As such, approaches that can improve inter-parent communication and foster effective co-parenting strategies are called for in promoting children's resilience.

Custodial (or Primary Residential) Parent and Child Relationships Post-Divorce

In the initial stage after divorce, parents with primary residential custody often question their efficacy as parents and express feeling overwhelmed with the task demands of parenting without a partner. Further, they get sick more often, report more frequent minor health problems associated with a depleted immune system, and more psychological distress (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1988; Simons & Johnson 1996). Residential custody of children remains at an overwhelming majority with the mothers at 82.5% (Grall, 2016). It is common for parents with primary custody to be consumed by the post-divorce adjustment process, experiencing reduced emotional availability and clinical or sub-clinical symptoms of depression (e.g., irritability, prolonged sadness, frustration or anhedonia). The typical post-divorce primary caregiver reports many structural systems disruptions, including less active monitoring of children, decreased disciplinary interventions, and overuse of punitive measures with their children (Forgatch, Patterson, & Ray, 1996; Hetherington, 1993).

In response, children typically display increased externalizing behaviors, become more oppositional, noncompliant, and emotionally inconsistent with temper outbursts or excessive attachment to parents. Mothers in the role of primary residential parent report increased disruptions in their relationships with sons as conflict escalates after divorce;

often these relationships become maladaptively coercive through both parties actions. For example, mothers were reported to become highly restrictive or controlling and sons increased their acting out with threatening behaviors, such as physical aggression or risk-taking outside the home (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 1999; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992). Hetherington (1993) found that even 2 years after divorce, most negative outcomes and conflict had decreased between sons and mothers who are primary caregivers, yet continued to be more troubled than those in households not experiencing divorce. In comparison, daughters reported initial insecurity related to their mother in the role as primary caregiver post-divorce, but described their relationship as close, warm, and companion-like after 2 years. These gender differences complicate the implementation of post-divorce interventions, as they highlight the need for immediate individualized intervention following separation, targeting the varied externalizing and internalizing difficulties throughout the family system. Generally, conflict emerges between children and custodial parents due to environmental stressors and lowered parental efficacy, with parent-child conflict lessening over time.

Mounting adversity can be found in the relationships of parents maintaining primary residential custody with children navigating adolescence post-divorce. In Hetherington's studies (1992, 1993), mother-daughter relationships in adolescence were reported to be more strained than those of peers not experiencing divorce; with girls typically having intense interactions to their mothers during puberty. Notably, higher conflict was demonstrated between mothers with daughters displaying *precocious puberty* (early developed secondary sex characteristics) and increased sexual acting out (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992). Further, mothers who were the residential parent post-

divorce described more failed attempts to regulate their daughters' promiscuous behaviors, even with heightened monitoring and restrictions (Hetherington et al., 1992). In fact, children of divorce reaching late adolescence disengage or leave home earlier than children in non-divorced families more than one third of the time (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995; Aquilino, 2006). It has been a common finding that the lack of consistent family involvement created by the changes of divorce may be supplanted by influential peer relationships (Amato & Booth, 1997). It has been hypothesized in the research that in the wake of divorce, children seek to replicate familial bonds in peer interaction and may align with other peers who are experiencing similarly distressed family systems, which maintain diminished oversight and allow for fewer barriers to antisocial or delinquent behaviors (Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi 1987; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). However, the same lack of family involvement can be filled with preventive factors that promote resilience, such as supportive relationships with a caring adult or an organized group (i.e., sports team or community organization) buffering against an adolescent's premature disengagement or liberation from their family system (Hetherington, 1993).

There have been consistent reported differences in parenting styles or practices found between mothers and fathers with primary residential custody post-divorce. The strained relationships in the family post-divorce generally support gender differences associated with time spent with a same-sex parent. Amato and Booth (1997), for example, found that daughters of custodial mothers reported increased warmth in their relationships post-divorce, while sons reported considerably less affection shared with their cus-

odial mothers. These sons were shown to initiate less contact with their fathers and report less affection toward their fathers in contrast to daughters and boys in non-divorced families. Further, Amato and Booth found custodial mothers to communicate more freely with their children post-divorce, that they engage in more monitoring activities, are more familiar with their children's friends or social network, and disclose more. By contrast, custodial fathers reported less stress related to parenting than custodial mothers and fewer difficulties exacting discipline or child management (Amato & Booth, 1997). These mixed findings support areas of strength and weakness in both mothers and fathers, making custody arrangements a perplexing decision that is recommended to involve a high level of co-parenting.

Longstanding findings support the implementation of the *authoritative parenting style* or parenting quality across post-divorce and non-divorced family systems as effective in managing a child's vulnerabilities to negative behaviors. Dating back to Baumrind (1966), the authoritative parent is responsive and child-centered in his/her approach, expressing warmth and a supportive presence while consistently monitoring and setting limits for the child. In contrast to disengaged, authoritarian, or permissive parenting styles, authoritative parenting styles have been associated with greater academic and social competency and less mental illness in children (Anderson, Lindner, & Bennion, 1992; Avenevoli, Sessa, & Steinberg, 1999; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). Parents managing a family through divorce report lower incidences of the use of authoritative strategies (e.g., fair limit setting delivered with concern or warmth) as compared to their non-divorced counterparts (Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Martinez & Forgatch, 2002; Simons & Johnson.,

1996; Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin, 1992). It would be easy to conclude that authoritative parenting should be increased through intervention post-divorce to mediate negative outcomes for children (which is evident in the most PDE program designs). However, mean levels of problematic behaviors (e.g., anger, disobedience, and rule violations) are higher in divorced as compared to non-divorced families, regardless of the implementation of an authoritative parenting style (Anderson et al., 1992; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). Therefore, interventions must involve training in effective parenting styles as well as modeling relational strategies that increase coping skills and co-parenting to address the diverse factors mitigating child outcomes.

Relationships Between Non-Residential Parents and Children Post-Divorce

Various factors have been associated with non-custodial parents continuing contact post-divorce including, low-conflict marriages and gender (increases in visitation if the child is a boy, as fathers are the majority of non-custodial parents). Some factors are linked to interventions or strategies, including the use of mediation, the non-custodial parent having a clear role with influence on the set up in a parenting plan, and PDE (Amato, 2000; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Braver et al., 1993; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992). As expected, the maintenance of a respectful and collaborative relationship between parents is frequently associated with high incidences of contact with non-residential parents post-divorce (Sobolewski & King, 2005). Further, a non-custodial parent who maintains continual contact with their child(ren) is more likely to be regular and up to date in child support payments. (Juby, Billette, Laplante, & LesBourdais, 2007). Child support continues to be one of the most contentious issues in the post-divorce family system; as of 2004, fewer than half of parents pay the full amount in a timely manner (Grall, 2006).

Non-residential fathers who sustain consistent and regular contact with their children are associated with numerous favorable outcomes, such as higher positive regard for both parents (Fabricius, 2003; Fabricius & Braver, 2006) and reduced judgment of fathers being solely responsible for the family dissolution (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). Quite remarkably, positive father involvement is associated with better health outcomes for children of divorce (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004; Aquilino, 2006; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; King, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006), as well as higher ratings of fathers' attunement to their child(ren) and the overall quality of the relationship between a father and child (Sobolewski & King, 2005). Further, Fabricius and Luecken (2007) found that non-residential fathers' level of contact may demonstrate effects independent of the level of conflict between parents. They found that higher levels of contact with the father were associated with better health outcomes for the child, a finding that was not mediated by the level of interparental conflict reported prior to divorce, during the divorce process, and 5 years post-divorce (Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). Cashmore, Parkinson, and Taylor (2008) also established a positive correlation between the frequency of overnights with the non-residential parent and reported quality of the relationship between the parent and the child post-separation/divorce, regardless of the reported level of parental conflict (past and present).

In contrast to fathers, a recent literature review revealed that mothers who do not retain custody of their children report more regular visitation and remaining close or emotionally connected to children after divorce (e.g., Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006). Gunnoe and Hetherington (2004) reported that teens with a non-residential mother saw

their mother more and received more social support than those with non-residential fathers. Further, Gunnoe and Hetherington found a significant association between the greater social support of non-residential mothers and higher reported general adjustment among their teen children. Although one cross-sectional study found that mothers without primary custody are delinquent on child support more often than fathers (Sousa & Sorenson, 2006), other evidence has shown that non-residential mothers are more compliant with meeting child support demands when proper legal orders are put in place (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, & Bay, 1993; Grall, 2009). In addition, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) demonstrated that when non-residential mothers have maintained close attachments with their children, reported relationships with stepmothers are strained and less closely bonded.

Finally, it must be noted that some families are able to establish a supportive family system post-divorce where mother and father involvement is well attuned and promotes children's adjustment beyond the requirements of parenting plans or custody agreements. King and Sobolewski (2006) examined the shared effects of both parents post-divorce in a national sample of families where mothers retained primary custody. The analysis showed support for both parents creating the greatest positive effects, where the more highly respondents rated the quality and responsiveness of relationships, the lower the prevalence of mental health difficulties in children. Further, the lowest rates of childhood mental health problems were reported when both parents were reported to be involved in their child's care and responsive to their child's needs. However, an earlier review by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1991) showed no significant difference between the same groups, with similar outcomes when both parents maintained a positive

relationship with their child(ren) or only one parent maintained a quality close relationship post-divorce. A quality relationship with at least one parent mitigated mental health problems in children with a significant increase in mental health problems when the child had a poor or detached relationship with both parents (Buchanan et al., 1991). Again, although these studies yielded conflicting findings, they collectively highlight the need for interventions that address and bolster quality interparental communication.

Parental Factors Mediating Post-Divorce Adjustment

Parental conflict has been frequently identified as the most significant factor associated with a child's adjustment after separation and divorce. In tandem, it is thus critical that steps are taken to minimize or prevent such conflict. Grych's (2005) meta-analysis found that across studies, interparental conflict was associated with poor adjustment in children at a greater magnitude than any other negative outcome related to divorce (Dadds, Atkinson, Turner, Blums, & Lendich, 1999; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003; Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald, & Swank, 2000). Within the findings, factors were identified that mitigate these risks and promote more positive outcomes related to child-adjustment. A child's attachment pattern, perceptions of parental disagreements being threatening, and level of self-blame were highly associated with child adjustment (Grych, 1998; Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004). The most salient protective measures involve eliminating children's exposure to child-focused interparental conflict and ensuring regular contact with the non-residential parent (Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 2008). The stronger and more connected the parent-child relationship, the higher the likelihood of positive child-adjustment outcomes post-divorce (Sigal et al., 2008). Further evidence

has supported better child outcomes (e.g., school performance, mental health and physical health) when parents work together to co-parent and lessen conflict (Amato et al., 2011; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007). Similarly, children whose parents implement effective or authoritative parenting qualities (e.g., warmth in communication and limit setting/control) have diminished adjustment difficulties (Sigal et al., 2008).

Parental Gatekeeping and Alienation

Kelly (1993) found that rather than custody decisions, the level of care parents achieve after divorce most determines if children do well. One of the most toxic practices that occur between parents post-divorce is maladaptive or restrictive gatekeeping, whereby a parent attempts to control the other parent's interactions or involvement with the child (Austin, Pruett, Kirkpatrick, Flens, & Gould, 2013). Gatekeeping occurs on a continuum from adaptive to maladaptive and happens in intact families, but is most prevalent in the exchanges surrounding custody and visitation. The damage occurs when one parent uses their emotional or financial interests to justify restricting access to the child (Saini, Drozd, & Olesen, 2017). In collaborative parenting or effective co-parenting, parents can engage in facilitative gatekeeping which promotes a supportive framework of exchange where children are given appropriate access to each parent and roles are clearly defined. Protective gatekeeping can be intentional or unintentional as the children are shielded from exposure to one parent's violence or aggression, substance abuse, and abusive parenting. Protective gatekeeping is adaptive in response to pathology in a parent; however, when unjustified, it can be used to alienate a parent who has not put their child in harm's way (Saini, Drozd, & Olesen, 2017).

Parent alienation is the antithesis of co-parenting, as one parent reinforces negative feelings or unreasonable judgments regarding the other parent's behavior (Clawar & Rivlin, 1991; Gardner, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Extreme negative attitudes repeatedly expressed create psychological instability and deplete the child's trust or love for the rejected parent. Often what is called the "campaign of degradation" by the aligned parent is a relentless rejection of the other parent, covertly implying the potential for abuse or dangers of their care (Saini, Drozd, & Olesen 2017). Imbued with distrust and fear, the alienated child believes the alienated parent is not wanted or needed, and attempts at contact from the rejected parent are rebuked and framed as harassment by the aligned parent. Ultimately, the child is damaged by the loss of the rejected parent, as he or she is shut out of the child's life while the co-parenting relationship becomes hostile and adversarial (Coltrane & Adams, 2003).

Co-Parenting

E. Mavis Hetherington, while assessing the results of her longitudinal Virginia Study (1982), prescribed notions of co-parenting and parallel parenting styles based on the level of conflict between the parents leading up to and through separation. Co-parenting was thought to represent the alignment of parents in a relationship that allowed for joint decision-making and shared influence over a child's well-being and has been conceptualized as a mediator as it interacts with family, individual, and environmental factors to affect outcomes. As an intervention, co-parenting strategies can be implemented as a mediator mitigating target outcomes (e.g., decreasing or deescalating conflict). Floyd, Gilliom, and Costigan (1998) found that the negative effects of parental depres-

sion (e.g., reduced parenting quality and poorer adjustment in children) could be mediated by effective co-parenting. Others have found that positive co-parenting can buffer children from the effects of interparental conflict (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). Results suggest high-quality co-parenting can lessen the effects of interparental conflict (McHale, 1995). Co-parenting thus can be utilized as a modifiable independent variable of research assessing intervention outcomes, as well as a protective factor that moderates risk-to-outcome relationships.

Previous results identify interparental conflict and reported marital quality as indicators or markers of risk, while parenting alliance or co-parenting was found to have a stronger relationship to child problems (Bearss & Eyberg, 1998; Feinberg, Neiderhiser, Reiss, Hetherington, & Simmens, 2000). Co-parenting as a mediator represents the interaction between the couple's relationship and their parenting practices. According to Feinberg's model the higher the assessed level of co-parenting, the less there is an influence of negative factors on child outcomes and adjustment (Feinberg et al., 2000; Feinberg, 2003; Floyd et al., 1998; Gonzales, Pitts, Hill, & Roosa, 2000). Feinberg incorporated Margolin, Gordis, and John's (2001) understanding of co-parenting as a "risk mechanism" that mediates the effects of conflict and accounts for much of the variance in negative outcomes related to interparental conflict. Specifically, the relationship between marital conflict and negative child outcomes became non-significant when co-parenting was added and controlled for in this model. Feinberg's findings support the view of co-parenting as a "risk mechanism" and the most salient guide to the identification of best practices for intervention as well as positive child adjustment (Feinberg, 2002), again emphasizing the need for effective intervention in this regard.

Parental Satisfaction

Deriving satisfaction from parenting and experiencing parenting as rewarding is essential in sustaining the motivation required to meet emotional, cognitive and physical demands of the role (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Johnston & Mash 1989). Results from varied fields of research associate perceived parental satisfaction and reported self-efficacy (Benzies, Trute, & Worthington, 2013; Leahy-Warren, McCarthy, & Corcoran, 2012; Whittaker & Cowley 2012). Child adjustment (e.g., behavioral and emotional) and parents' satisfaction after divorce are highly associated with efficacy, as well as competence to exert control in an environment of stressful transition (T. Jones & Prinz 2005). Although existing research has found parental efficacy and parental satisfaction to positively related (e.g., Coleman & Karraker 2003; Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Johnston & Mash, 1989), the pathways through which self-efficacy beliefs interact or effect a parent's sense of satisfaction remain undetermined.

Márk-Ribiczey, Miklósi and Szabó (2016) found satisfaction with the parental role to be negatively related to the use of maladaptive strategies (e.g., self-blame and rumination), and positively associated with the use of planning or executive function. Similarly, Geisler, Vennewald, Kubiak, and Weber (2010) found that cognitive emotion regulation involving executive function (specifically planning) predicted satisfaction beyond just the parenting role, with positive effects for overall life satisfaction. This set of findings suggests that cognitive emotion regulation strategies may mediate parenting efficacy and parenting satisfaction.

Parental Efficacy

Further research suggests that another significant mediator of negative outcomes for children is parenting efficacy (also referred to as parenting self-efficacy), which is highly associated with parenting satisfaction and co-parenting. Often referred to in the literature as a function of parenting quality or parenting style, *parental efficacy* is the individual's ability and confidence to fulfill the many responsibilities and demands of being a parent and is rooted in Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. In his theory, Bandura outlined the mediating effect of self-efficacy on performance. Individuals with low efficacy ratings display anxiety, lower self-esteem, more negative feelings, as well as tend to feel easily overwhelmed by the demands of an undertaking, frequently shying away from challenges and persevering less on tasks (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995). Parental efficacy mediates the relationship between parental emotional distress and a lack of parental sensitivity (Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997; Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Teti, O'Connell, & Reiner, 1996), where *parental sensitivity* or warmth is defined as the ability respond to a child and correctly interpret the child's needs (Mesman, Oster, & Camras, 2012).

Thus, parents possessing high parental efficacy with the support of positive co-parenting strategies are thought to buffer children from a lack of responsiveness that plagues many over-stressed parents post-divorce. Further, bolstered co-parenting skills protect against parental alienation, loss of parenting satisfaction and lack of parenting self-esteem that may lead a parent to depression, thereby worsening outcomes for their children (e.g., Carter, Garrity-Rokous, Chazan-Cohen, Little, & Briggs-Gowan, 2001; Cohn & Campbell, 1992; Field, 2000; Forehand, Long, & Brody, 1988; Gotlib & Beach,

1995; Johnson & Jacob, 2000; N. A. Jones, Field, & Davalos, 2000; Martins & Gaffan, 2000).

Parental efficacy combined with cooperative co-parenting moderates the lack of warmth post-divorce through reported increases in involved parenting, parenting satisfaction and competent behavioral management. For example, low parental efficacy can be expected to lead to a lower level of sustained, consistent, and competent management behaviors or discipline. Parents with lower efficacy may be more vulnerable to child pressure, contextual stress, loss of parenting satisfaction and mood fluctuations, leading to inconsistent responding and a greater tendency to yield to child demands. Further, parents experiencing lower parental efficacy have more “fight or flight” responses, depressive stances, and negative affect when navigating problematic child behavior. These parents over-utilize a coercive discipline style (Bondy & Mash, 1999), and low parental efficacy has been associated with abusive parenting practices (Bugental, 2001). Uniquely, under stressful parenting conditions (e.g., managing hyperactivity in the face of serious life event like divorce), low parental efficacy may engender further negative coping as the parent has a tendency to withdraw rather than become abusive (Mash & Johnston, 1990). Moreover, with low-efficacy parents, levels of neglect and abuse have been found at a higher rate throughout the literature. In response to distressed or hard-to-read signals from a baby, parents with low parental efficacy appear helpless or enact grandiose behaviors that convey a false sense of the infant’s well-being (Donovan & Leavitt, 1989; Donovan, Leavitt, & Walsh, 1990). If such variability in responding is found within individual parents undergoing divorce, as seems likely, without an appraisal of parenting effi-

cacy and parenting satisfaction, adaptive coping strategies cannot be implemented. Regardless of the level of co-parenting communication, if the low-efficacy parent is caught in a coercive cycle of harsh parenting, he or she will experience consistent maladaptive coping responses related to their child (Patterson & Forgatch, 1995).

Intervention Programs

Thus, given the above demonstrated need for effective co-parenting practices and the fostering of parental efficacy, effective parental intervention programs are of critical importance and growing relevance (Quinney & Fouts, 2004). Siebert (1996) viewed resilience to be related to self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept. Strengthening parental efficacy promotes resilience in the face of divorce with effects overflowing into children's lives. Resilience can be taught through skills-based interventions and may have long-term effects as children's functioning may remain intact when not exposed to a parent's dysfunction. A parent's efficacy or competence in adaptively coping with the adversity of divorce fosters children's coping strategies (Kerig, 2001). Active coping efforts and coping efficacy have been found to contribute to a decreased risk for externalizing and internalizing behavioral problems in children of divorced parents between the ages of 9 and 12 (e.g., Sandler, Tein, Mehta, Wolchik, & Ayers, 2000). Conversely, research consistently demonstrates that when parents become disengaged and allow the child to feel responsible for their parents' problems, there is a negative relationship with healthy adjustment. For example, Jouriles, Spiller, Stephens, McDonald, and Swank (2000) found that children reporting themselves to blame for conflict between their parents were more likely to show externalizing problems (as reported by their mothers) and to self-report symptoms of anxiety and depression. Therefore, intervention strategies that

encourage parents to help children understand and free themselves from feelings of self-blame are most effective. Frequently, ongoing conflict between parents is focused on judging each other's parental efficacy and how the conflict in itself negatively impacts child adjustment. In particular, feeling "caught in the middle" between parents or being triangulated into parents' disagreements increases the likelihood children of divorce reporting depression and anxiety (Afifi & McManus, 2010), avoidance, dissatisfaction (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003), as well as reduced self-esteem and happiness (Amato & Afifi, 2006). These findings suggest that intervention efforts for families in transition should help reduce children's exposure and engagement in their parents' disagreements through co-parenting skills as well as renewed parental self-efficacy that buffers children from conflicted parental exchanges.

Additional litigation pursued around divorce or custody-related issues has been analyzed as a marker of the adjustment process of separating parents. The frequency of re-litigation by parents in family courts has been used as a proxy measure for parental conflict. Arbutnot, Kramer, and Gordon (1997) demonstrated that over a 2-year period, participants in a 2-hour PDE program re-litigated less than half as often as divorcing parents in a comparison group. In the Geasler and Blaisure 1998 national survey, counties that reported sequencing of services and litigation revealed that 70% of the time a PDE preceded mediation (a more civil, collaborative, and less adversarial dissolution) as opposed to litigation in the courtroom. PDEs have extended the role of the courts to help parents understand the effects of divorce and conflict on their children even post-separation.

Court-mandated PDEs are the most common intervention focused on easing parent and child adjustment to divorce (Amato, 2010). Across the nation, family courts have responded to the high prevalence of divorce by mandating PDE classes prior to divorce being granted as well as for never-married parents in child support disputes. As of 2015, 21 states mandate court-affiliated divorce education classes for parents in contested divorces with goals of moderating negative impacts by providing parents with skills and information to promote (a) children's adjustment, (b) to decrease conflict between parents, and to minimize ongoing court involvement and re-litigation rates (Arbuthnot, 2002; Blaisure & Geasler, 2006; DeLusé & Braver, 2015; Grych, 2005; Pedro-Carroll, 2005; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008).

History of PDEs

Over the past 45 years, the family court system has had increasing legal responsibility adjudicating the issues related to matters of the family that were formally reserved to culture and religion. As evolving state referendums on no-fault divorce and parents' rights emerged, the family dissolution process has proven more prevalent and complicated. The family court has become an institution overwhelmed by separation and divorce cases. Family court judges and referees are called to expertly determine custody decisions that designate the precise amount of time children should spend with each parent, as well as design an agreement that implements these custody arrangements with a practical application (Sigal et al., 2008). In family law, designating the rules of parent interaction is often the most complex and time-consuming aspect of a custody agreement, only surpassed by child-support decisions. As a result, for over three decades, PDE programs have been affiliated with the family courts in the United States to support parents

through this process. Since their inception, these programs have focused on moderating the effects of divorce on children and are offered in many counties and states across the country in community-based settings or as on-site family court services (Solomon, 1992; Kramer, Arbuthnot, Gordon, Rousis, & Hoza, 1998).

The first documented program, General Responsibilities As Separating Parents (GRASP), began in Johnston County, Kansas in 1978. Subsequently, there was a rapid expansion of PDE programs for parents, which ultimately peaked in the late 1990s (James & Roeder-Esser, 1994). In 1994, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts held its first International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs (last convened in 2008). In 1998, Geasler and Blaisure conducted the first major nationwide U.S. survey of these programs finding that 1,516 counties or cities in all 50 states had education programs for divorcing parents. Most court-mandated programs (82%) were provided by private community organizations in community-based settings. According to Geasler and Blaisure (1999), the courts reported that these PDE programs were better aligned with the services provided at community mental health providers, community colleges, and university cooperative extension services (e.g., continuing or adult education programs) as court facilities were not as well-equipped to meet the needs of participants (e.g., hours of operation and dedicated/available classrooms).

In 2008, Pollet and Lombreglia conducted an updated nationwide survey by contacting parent education directors, social workers, psychologists, and court personnel via phone interview to analyze all existing U.S. court-affiliated divorce education programs across 46 states. The results revealed the existence of parent education classes with a mode of 2 hours for court-provided programs and 4 hours for community run programs.

Sixty-four percent of programs included the goal of reducing the child's exposure to conflict between parents, 55% worked toward improving parenting skills, and 32% attempted to reduce prolonged legal action (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008). Facilitators frequently cited the need for evaluations and studies that rigorously examined the efficacy of PDE classes on targeted outcomes (e.g., keeping the child out of conflict) to empirically support parents' consistently expressed anecdotes (Criddle, Allgood, & Piercy, 2003).

Brief Literature Review of PDEs

Since Blaisure and Geasler's (1996) initial survey of PDEs in the United States, more research has been conducted on PDE program efficacy, including a number of studies with a randomized trial design (Fackrell, Hawkins, & Kay, 2011). Findings generally show that children of parents who participate in PDEs report better school performance, reduced incidence of illegal substance use, and reduced emotional disturbances, while parents who attended a PDE class consistently report increased use of co-parenting communication skills (Brandon, 2006), as well as having benefited from the course content (Brotherson, White, & Masich, 2010).

In 2011, Fackrell, Hawkins, & Kay published a meta-analysis of 19 evaluations of PDE programs which reported consistent positive effects. However, the researchers acknowledged that the quality of methodology in the studies was insufficient for generalization, with weak effect sizes, heavy selection bias, and high long-term attrition rates. Notwithstanding the increase in the number of PDEs and the call for more evidence, few methodologically rigorous evaluations of such programs have been conducted to fully validate court mandates and continued funding (Salem et al., 2013).

Although in many studies treatment groups attending PDEs show few significantly better ratings for child outcomes than controls, most studies have found high consumer satisfaction and high positive feedback rates (Sigal et al., 2011). Some recent studies have shown that attending a short-term PDE class has no effect on rates of re-litigation, making the findings even more complex to unravel (Criddle et al., 2003; Homrich, Glover, & Blackwell White, 2004). Reductions in re-litigation have often been a finding in earlier studies and held up as a cost justification for mandated court-connected PDEs, although there have only been replicated decreases in re-litigation for parents reporting high conflict (Arbuthnot, Kramer, & Gordon, 1997). Mounting evidence reinforces that there is no significant change in reported parent attitudes, parenting style (especially if authoritarian parenting is already in place), and child adjustment after parents attend a short-term PDE (Elrod, 2001; Goodman, Bonds, Sandler, & Braver, 2004; Grych, 2005). Further, Sigal et al.'s (2011) review of 14 studies evaluating PDEs found little evidence that they are achieving their stated goals of improving the quantity of non-residential parent-child contact, fostering the quality of parent-child relations by either the custodial or non-custodial parent, reducing interparental conflict, improving co-parenting, reducing relitigation or most importantly, improving outcomes for children. (p. 135)

Despite the lack of rigorous evaluation and a uniform body of literature attesting program effectiveness, there is a rich tradition supporting PDE. The belief is that that a well-designed program will be successful intervening in parenting practices post-divorce and impact children for the better.

New York State

Since the 1980s, New York State has offered PDE programs without any formal oversight from the unified state court system. Individual counties sponsored parent education interventions, as well as set standards for their implementation and how parents were referred. In the last two decades, there has been a push for an institutionalization of these education programs in an effort to support more collaborative parental relationships when pursuing divorce and custody litigation. Many organizations like FamilyKind have lobbied for the mandating of PDE programs in New York State, as is the practice with most other states. Erickson and Ver Steegh (2001) reported that 35 states were formally regulating PDE programs through legislation or court mandates. In 2001, New York State's Chief Judge, Judith S. Kaye, initiated the New York State Parent Education and Awareness Program. Judge Kaye commented,

to foster the availability of parent education throughout New York State, make judges aware of parent education and its benefits, clarify judicial authority to refer parents to these programs, and encourage greater and more uniform utilization of this resources by court-involved parents. (Frazee, 2005, p. 124)

The Chief Judge went on to commission the multi-disciplinary Parent Education Advisory Board to set and ensure standards of quality, safety, and accountability in regulating parent and education programs, as well as the court referral criteria for parents. New York's delay of the institutionalization of parent education allowed for the combination of multiple sources and experiences of other states' programs, as well as the inclusion of peer-reviewed literature and evidence-based or empirical models of parent psychoeducation.

The current New York State PEAP—the focus of this study—derives its roots from many sources including the Assisting Children through Transition program (ACT), Parent Education And Custody Effectiveness (PEACE), Parents Apart, and the New York State Family Court’s Parents and Children Transitioning (PACT; Fischer, 1999; Geasler & Blaisure, 1999; Pedro-Carroll, 1997). New York State’s Parent Education Advisory Board referenced the Parents Apart seminar in the composition of the current PEAP handbook (Fuhrmann, McGill, & O’Connell, 1999). Parents Apart is a 6-hour evidence-based workshop for parents, which helps children cope with their separation or divorce. Parents Apart is a NYS-certified workshop that is similarly facilitated by therapists and attorneys and addresses the same material as FamilyKind’s PEAP with a focus on children’s emotional reactions to their parents’ marital dissolution as well as strategies for helping child adjustment. Parents Apart participants select either two 3-hour sessions or one 6-hour session. The current PEAP program is an updated version of the PACT program with minor changes, such as updated references and referral sources under the leadership of the Chief Judge Lippman (2009–2015) and presently Chief Judge DiFiore (2016–present), who maintained the program after Chief Judge Kaye established it (Frazee, Pedro-Carroll, Adler-Baeder, Douglass, & Lutz, 2016).

Previous New York State PDE Program Evaluations

The first PDE program affiliated with the New York State Family Court and a predecessor of the PEAP was PEACE, an experimental, interdisciplinary class. PEACE was a court-connected program lasting between 5 to 6 hours with referrals made by judges who identified participants through divorce and custody litigation. PEACE was established in 1992 by a group of lawyers, judges, court administrators, and mental health

professionals. The core belief of its founders was that children are more likely to cope with the transitions of parental divorce or separation if parents reduce their conflict and take responsibility for creating an effective parent–child relationship. The PEACE program modeled the intervention on research, which demonstrated that prolonged exposure to conflict between parents significantly increases the risk for, decreases in a child’s emotional functioning and educational performance (Schepard & Schlissel, 1995). PEACE was therefore designed to teach parenting skills that increased parents’ understanding of the divorce process, co-parenting communication, parental efficacy, parenting quality between former partners, and parents’ recognition of the impact of divorce on children (Sigal et al., 2008).

There are several programs that qualify as NYS-certified PEAPs and all are based on the PEACE model including (a) PACT, which is the previous name for the current manualized PEAP, (b) ACT, Helping Children Cope, Catholic Charities’ Our Kids, Forever Parents, Children 1st, and Parents Apart. These programs are currently operating in 45 counties in New York State (New York State Unified Court System, n.d.). Past peer-reviewed studies of the PEACE and ACT programs have lacked rigor and significant effect sizes, with designs targeting customer satisfaction outcomes as well as yielding poor validity and generalizability.

In 2000, the Hofstra University Department of Psychology conducted a program evaluation of PEACE (Schepard, 2000). The program evaluated 89 participants who attended the Nassau County program. Parents were assessed in a pretest/posttest design with a 3-month follow-up condition. The treatment (or experimental) group was com-

pared to a waitlisted control group of parents in the PEACE program (Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008; Schepard, 2000). The evaluation results reported high satisfaction among participants who had attended the PEACE program; parents felt they gained knowledge about the legal process of divorce after the intervention and were more knowledgeable on average than controls. In addition, surveyed participants reported more positive attitudes regarding parenting their children 3 months post-intervention, with increased management or tolerance of varied behaviors.

McKenry, Clark, and Stone (1999) evaluated Ohio's version of the PEACE program. Parents were ordered by judges to attend the 2.5-hour version of the PEACE seminar and the experimental study assessed a group of parents who had completed the program ($n = 136$) and a control group ($n = 100$). After contacting 1,000 parents across 2 counties in Ohio, the respondents were assigned to the study conditions based on county. Participants who lived in the county where the PEACE program was mandated became the treatment group, while a neighboring county where parents were not mandated and did not attend a PEACE program comprised the control group. Participants were assessed through follow-up self-report surveys capturing retrospective perceptions of program efficacy at the 4-year mark after completing the program. In the questionnaire designed for the program evaluation of PEACE, the authors asked participants to rate on Likert-type rating self-appraisals of their co-parenting relationship, relationship with their children, their adjustment to the custody/visitation arrangements, their attitude regarding the non-residential parent's role, their knowledge about how children adjust to divorce, and their personal assessment of the PEACE program. There were no program differ-

ences found across domains of self-report for knowledge of how children adjusted to divorce, but findings did indicate that custodial parents in the treatment group reported more satisfaction with their ability to co-parent. Further results included a significant increase in perceived closeness or quality of the parent–child relationship from parents who completed the program, $F(1, 234) = 4.71, p < .05$, and overall, parents in the treatment group endorsed positive perceptions of their experience in the program. (McKenry, Clark, & Stone, 1999).

The most recent evaluation of a NYS-certified PEAP was Pedro-Carroll et al.'s (2001) follow-up study of 609 participants in Rochester, validating her ACT program for divorcing parents. The ACT classes are convened over two sessions extending from 2.5 to 3 hours (5 to 6 hours total). Like the PEACE model, the ACT program involves didactic lessons as well as active skills training in the context of a theory of change paradigm. Evidence-based skills and strategies promoting better child outcomes post-divorce are taught through videos and role-playing activities (Pedro-Carroll & Frazee, 2001; Pedro-Carroll et al., 2001). The majority of parent participants in the ACT program responded to 6- and 12-month follow-up surveys with positive feedback (e.g., endorsing the strategies learned as helpful, increased understanding of children's needs post-divorce, applying recommended communication skills). The study showed a significant decrease in conflict with former partners at the follow-up periods. In addition, over time survey data showed decreased need for further litigation, increased use of suggested parenting practices, and increased positive adjustment in the children of participants (Pedro-Carroll & Frazee, 2001; Pedro-Carroll et al., 2001; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008).

FamilyKind's PEAP

FamilyKind is a New York City-based non-profit offering cost-effective services (mediation, matrimonial law, advocacy, education, supportive groups and individual treatment) for families coping with divorce and separation. FamilyKind's PEAP is an evidence-based PDE intervention adapted from empirically reviewed psychoeducational programs, including ACT, PEACE, and Parents Apart (Pedro-Carroll, 2005; McKenry, Clark, & Stone, 1999; Fuhrmann, McGill, O'Connell, 1999). In 2012, FamilyKind first launched its Family Education Department offering NYS-certified PEAP classes. This 4.5-hour psychoeducational program is for parents pursuing litigation, usually involving custody or visitation in the family court system or through mediation. The goal of the program is to educate in four focus areas: (a) the parent, (b) the child(ren), (c) the other parent, and (d) the legal process (Frazee et al., 2016).

Parents are brought together in a supportive group to promote positive education on their role and rights in the custody and family litigation processes. The implicit goal is to impart information about the impact of divorce on children's adjustment (Pedro-Carroll et al., 2001). The class size is limited to no more than 50 people and a 1:15 facilitator-to-participant ratio is maintained for small breakout sessions. There are typically 2 facilitators leading the PEAP: a licensed mental health professional and attorney. They engage the participants with sensitivity and establish a safe, trusting environment to encourage parent involvement. The PEAP classes are generally co-led, ideally by a male and female who share task and process roles. This arrangement provides parents a model of a cooperative, cross-gender adult relationship and also serves as a same-sex adult role

model with whom each parent can identify. Having two facilitators also increases helpful responses to sensitive issues, nonverbal cues, and behavior management problems.

The curriculum is child-centered, with the majority of the intervention (approximately 2.5 to 3 hours) content focused on 3 goals: promoting child well-being, creating a stable home environment, and engaging in healthy parental functioning. A theme that is reinforced in every segment of the program is to raise awareness that children are not to be triangulated (or “put in the middle”) through parental conflict.

Research consulted in the design of the present NYS PEAP handbook and an affiliated Parts Apart program suggests that the risk of behavioral difficulties in children decreases when interparental conflict can be avoided or decreased (Altenhofen, Sutherland, & Biringen, 2010; Fuhrmann, McGill, & O’Connell, 1999; Lee, 1997). Further, strategies taught in the PEAP and Parents Apart to reduce triangulation have been associated with decreases in anxiety, depression, and misconduct in children of divorce (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011; Buchanan et al., 1991; Schrodt & Afifi, 2007). The PEAP facilitators explicitly reference Wallerstein’s abovementioned findings on the emotional risks children of divorce face when they hold onto the misguided conclusion that they are the cause of the divorce or damaging memories of the final separation of their parents (Wallerstein & Lewis, 1998). Parents are provided concrete guidelines through a handbook, videos and role play activities focusing on how to engage their children on the topic of family dissolution. Research is presented to parents in a relatable discourse that encourages them to seek out interventions for their children that may promote adaptive adjustment, as well as targeting communication strategies to alleviate the misconceptions children may bear concerning their role in the divorce and how they define the divorce, and

to provide emotional support to validate the children's feelings (Emery, Kitzmann, & Waldron, 1999). The latter part of the program (the legal process) involves a didactic explanation of varied components in the legal determinations of divorce with the addition of small group discussion mediated by a facilitator. The small groups focus on general feedback and shared common experiences without explicit discussion or directives related to personal case details. FamilyKind's PEAP concludes with the presentation of a certificate of compliance to each participant, which serves as a verification of attendance.

All participants referred to FamilyKind's PEAP are screened for a history of intimate partner or domestic violence. Prior to enrollment, potential participants are directly asked if an order of protection has been put in place or a history of documented serious incidents of family violence has occurred involving the other parent. To ensure every participant's safety and security, parents identified with intimate partner or domestic violence are assigned to different class dates (or in rare circumstances where parents must attend the same class, they are never assigned the same small discussion group) as their "*other parent.*" Security is provided at all FamilyKind PEAP sessions.

Purpose of Study

This study sought to provide empirical evidence for the impact of a FamilyKind's PEAP PDE program. This assessment initiated follow-up surveys for parents to appraise co-parenting practices and parenting attitudes. This study evaluated FamilyKind's implementation of the PEAP using a cross-sectional static-group comparison quasi-experimental design. Parent participants were brought together one time for a 4.5-hour supportive group that offers education on how family dissolution changes the parents' role and the child's needs. The PEAP teaches communication strategies to keep children from

“the middle” of conflictual interparental relationships during divorce, outlines child development accompanied by typical reactions to divorce, offers access to mediation techniques (i.e., a non-adversarial dispute resolution process), and provides instruction on positive practices in navigating the legal hurdles of separation and custody agreements.

This study assessed the efficacy of FamilyKind’s communication of the four focus or target areas in the PEAP through parents’ post-intervention self-reports of (a) co-parenting, (b) parenting satisfaction (feelings related to parenting motivation, anxiety, and frustration), and (c) parenting efficacy (or resourcefulness, competence, and effectiveness in the parenting role). The results were analyzed by comparing differences in these three domains between a group of parents who participated in the program and a control group comprised of divorcing parents who did not receive the intervention. In addition, parents’ responses to items assessing the level of participant satisfaction and affective responses to the FamilyKind PEAP class, as well as willingness to recommend the program were evaluated.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examined the effectiveness of New York State’s PEAP, a brief PDE program, as implemented by FamilyKind’s parent education department. The following research questions (RQ) and associated hypotheses guided this study.

Research Question 1

RQ1: Does participation in FamilyKind’s PEAP improve parents’ reported ratings of co-parenting?

H_1 : It was predicted that participation in PEAP would be associated with higher scores of co-parenting than controls on the Brief Measure of Co-Parenting (BMC).

Research Question 2

RQ2: Does participation in FamilyKind's PEAP improve parents' reported ratings of parental self-efficacy?

H₂: It was predicted that participation in PEAP would be associated with higher ratings on the parenting efficacy subscale than controls on the Parenting Sense of Competence scale.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Does participation in FamilyKind's PEAP improve parents' reported ratings of parental satisfaction?

H₃: It was predicted that participation in PEAP would be associated with higher ratings on the parenting satisfaction subscale than controls on the Parenting Sense of Competence scale.

Research Question 4

RQ4: Does FamilyKind's PEAP have high ratings of participant satisfaction with comfort in sharing during the program, as well as leave participants reporting high ratings of more hopefulness and willingness to recommend the program?

H₄: It was predicted that participants would endorse high ratings of satisfaction with the FamilyKind PEAP class upon completion.

H₅: It was predicted that participants would endorse high ratings of comfort in sharing experiences and participating during the PEAP class session.

H₆: It was predicted that participants would endorse high ratings of hopefulness upon completion of the program.

*H*₇: It was predicted that participants would be highly willing to recommend the program to others.

Summary

Ultimately, despite the ever-growing body of research on divorce, research still follows the general framework provided by three seminal studies: (a) the Marin County Project, (b) Hetherington's Virginia Study, and (c) the Binuclear Study. Further, results on both short- and long-term outcomes for both parents and children impacted by divorce continue to remain mixed. What is clear, however, is that parent education programs have demonstrated success in bolstering parenting efficacy and improving parent-child relationship. However, as previously mentioned, despite the calls to increase or mandate participation in PEAP programs, the empirical research assessing such programs continues to remain sparse. This study attempted to address this gap in the literature by assessing the efficacy of FamilyKind's PEAP in the areas of co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy. Chapter 3 will provide a detailed overview of the methodology utilized in this cross-sectional study.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

The research approach for this study was quantitative, using a cross-sectional static-group comparison quasi-experimental design to determine the extent to which parents' appraisal of their own parenting improved after participating in a brief PDE, specifically regarding practices and attitudes in the domains of co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy. A control group was used in this study to reduce threats to internal validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The principal investigator was unable to randomly assign participants to the treatment or control group; therefore, convenience sampling was used. Participants in the treatment group were all divorcing parents who had completed FamilyKind's PEAP class from 2014 to 2016. Participants in the control group were divorcing parents recruited through the Internet from various sources, including matrimonial lawyers, listservs, and Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT or MTurk). Participants in the treatment group consented and completed the pretest/Time 1 survey prior to the class (see Appendix A) and the posttest/feedback survey after the class (see Appendix B). They were also assigned to either a 3-month or 6-month follow-up condition (Time 2; see Appendix C for follow-up survey). The pretest, posttest, and demographic form were initially developed by the FamilyKind evaluation team in 2012, and were amended for this study. After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in

October 2014, treatment group participants were invited to the study and signed consent forms prior to beginning the PEAP class.

Treatment Group

Beginning in April of 2015, treatment group participants were solicited by email from classes completed 6 months prior until a total of 10 participants completed the follow-up survey. Following the inclusion of 10 participants in the 6-months condition, an additional 10 participants were recruited for the treatment group who had completed the PEAP class within the past 3 months.

The participants solicited via email for the study attended a FamilyKind PEAP class sometime between October 2014 and February 2016, during which time 29 classes were offered (twice monthly) and 155 parents completed a class (with a mean class size 5 parents). From April 2015 to May 2016, 90 participants who had completed the pretest (Time 1) and posttest/feedback surveys were sent a follow-up survey via Qualtrics. Out of these 90, 32 participants endorsed “yes” on the digital re-consent. Twenty-three participants completed the follow-up survey (11 participants at 6 months post-intervention and 12 participants at 3 months post-intervention), which represented a 25% response rate for the treatment group.

Control Group

In October 2015, potential control group participants were administered a screening survey to qualify for the study through the AMT platform. They were sent a private link to consent to the study via Qualtrics and completed the pretest/Time 1 survey (see Appendix D). Of the 122 AMT workers who responded to the initial screening, 110 qualified for the study and were sent a link for the informed consent and Time 1 survey.

Of these potential participants, 27 completed the survey (without omissions) and were randomly assigned to a 3-month or 6-month follow-up condition (follow-up/Time 2) using computer-generated, randomized numbers (<https://www.randomizer.org/>). In order to buffer against attrition, 55% ($n = 14$) of the qualified AMT workers were randomly assigned to the 6-month follow-up condition and sent the Time 2 survey via Qualtrics in April 2016 (see Appendix E). Of these 14, 11 individuals completed the Time 2 survey. In January of 2016, the remaining 45% ($n = 13$) were sent Time 2 surveys, and 12 individuals completed them. Altogether, of the initial 110 qualified AMT workers, 23 completed the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys, representing a 21% response rate for the control group.

Procedure

The researcher worked with administrators of FamilyKind, a non-profit organization that conducts PEAP classes in New York City through their Parent Education Department. Since 2013, the program has utilized the FamilyKind Parenting Survey (FKPS) to assess parenting practices and attitudes related to divorce and separation, as well as to solicit program-specific feedback. The FKPS contains a pretest and posttest, both of which were administered to participants prior to the initiation of this study.

Recruitment and data collection for this study began after receiving approval from Pace University's IRB in October 2014. At this time, consent was obtained from participants, which allowed access to their previously collected data. However, due to revisions made in the surveys (pretest and posttest) by the principal investigator, viable data for this study could only be collected by FamilyKind after October 2014. FamilyKind's previous data were not included in order to ensure standardization and integrity of the data

collected. However, this study utilized data (i.e., contact information, number of children, age of children, and name of children's "other parent") that was independently collected by FamilyKind staff when registering parents for the PEAP class. Data were de-identified prior to inclusion in this study.

The principal investigator trained facilitators of FamilyKind's PEAP regarding informed consent (see Appendix F) and assigning randomized participant numbers. For the treatment group, the informed consent and Time 1 survey were handed out to each participant before the beginning of the class. At the conclusion of the PEAP, parents were given the posttest survey immediately after receiving their completion certificate.

Procedure for Treatment Group

Parents who were part of the treatment group and attended FamilyKind's PEAP were instructed to read the informed consent, which included information on the purpose of the study, confidentiality, limitations of confidentiality, the expectations of participation, compensation, benefits and risks, and the contact information of investigators. The risks were explained to parents by trained facilitators. Parents were given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study. The facilitators verbally explained that there were no explicit incentives for participation and parents had a right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences.

Participants in the treatment group were sent an individually generated secure link to the follow-up survey at either 3 or 6 months. These links expired 30 days from their creation to ensure that the surveys were completed within a reasonable timeframe. In the email sent with the follow-up survey link, participants were informed that they would be entered into a raffle for one \$100 Amazon gift card.

Procedure for Control Group

Participants for the control group were recruited via emails to divorce lawyers, listservs for divorcing parents, and the AMT website, from which the majority of participants were recruited. An eligibility screening was sent out to registered AMT workers, with a compensation of \$0.45. The initial inquiry was restricted to AMT workers with a computer IP address that was registered in the United States and met the requirement of a 90% or greater acceptance rate of their previously completed tasks (meaning they had answered many previous surveys with veracity and supplied accurate demographic information).

Inclusion criteria were as follows: currently a parent, had engaged in divorce, separation or custody litigation with their child's other parent, and lived in the United States (the New York City metro area was specifically requested; however, this was not an exclusion criterion). Additionally, workers could not have completed (or planned to enroll in the next year) in a PDE class. After meeting inclusion criteria, potential control group participants were assigned a randomly generated number and emailed a secure individual link to complete the informed consent and pretest survey. Control group participants answered 13 demographic questions and 13 questions from the FKPS.

At either 3 or 6 months, participants were sent an individually generated secure link to the follow-up/ Time 2 survey. Consistent with the procedure for the treatment group, links expired within 30 days. Control group participants were compensated \$2 for completing the pretest and \$3 for completing the follow-up survey through AMT. The total potential compensation was \$5.45.

Instruments

FamilyKind Parenting Survey. Participants completed the FKPS, which contains 13 items related to parenting and child adjustment in the context of divorce or child custody litigation: (a) four items pertaining to parenting practices and conflict; and (b) nine items related to parenting attitudes, including appraisals of parenting efficacy and perceptions of child adjustment. The FKPS was designed by the FamilyKind evaluation team to assess parents' responses to the PEAP class material. The FKPS has not yet been analyzed for reliability or validity.

Brief Measure of Co-Parenting. The BMC is a shortened 14-item version of the Co-Parenting Relationship Scale (CRS), which was based on Feinberg's (2002) conceptual framework of co-parenting. This framework includes four overlapping domains: (a) childrearing agreement, (b) co-parental support/undermining, (c) division of labor, and (d) joint management of family dynamics. These domains play a central role in family life, providing essential support and security for parents and children. Scores on the CRS have been found to be highly correlated with parenting quality (Feinberg, 2003). The CRS is comprised of 35 items on a 7-point Likert scale. It contains seven subscales: (a) Co-Parenting - Agreement, (b) Co-Parenting - Closeness, (c) Exposure to Conflict, (d) Co-Parenting-Support, (e) Co-Parenting - Undermining, (f) Endorsement of Partner Parenting, and (g) Division of Labor. The subscales have been found to be highly correlated with the domains of co-parenting (childrearing agreement, support/ undermining, satisfaction with the division of labor, and family management; Feinberg, Brown, & Kan, 2012).

The BMC is comprised of two items from each of the seven subscales of the CRS. The items selected for use in the BMC demonstrated strong correlations with their respective subscale score (i.e., high factor loadings) and conceptually captured the core meaning of each subscale (Feinberg et al., 2012). The full CRS has been found to demonstrate excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .91 to .94 across gender and data collection time points. The BMC also possesses good internal consistency reliability, with alphas ranging from .81 to .89 (Feinberg et al., 2012). The BMC provides a sum score, which quantifies the level of co-parenting reported by the parent; higher scores represent better co-parenting relationships.

Parenting Sense of Competence Scale. The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) was used to measure parenting satisfaction and efficacy. The measure was first developed by Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman (1978), with a target population of parents of infants. It was later adapted by Johnston and Mash (1989) to target parents with children of all ages. The PSOC is the most commonly used self-report measure of parental self-esteem (T. Jones & Prinz, 2005). Parenting self-esteem is made up of distinct, yet related components of social value or role satisfaction and personal efficacy or competence. On the PSOC, parenting self-esteem is a combination of a parent's contentment (i.e., liking or satisfaction with being a parent) and perceived effectiveness (i.e., personal appraisals of efficacy) as a parent. This self-report scale assesses parents' attitudes across two factors: Parenting Satisfaction, defined as the quality of affect or liking associated with the parenting role; and Parenting Efficacy, defined as the degree to which a parent perceives his or her competence and confidence in handling the parenting role.

The scale contains 17 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale. Ten items are related to parenting satisfaction and seven to parenting efficacy. The Parenting Satisfaction subscale examines parents' anxiety, motivation, and frustration, while the Parenting Efficacy subscale examines parents' competence, capability levels, and problem-solving abilities in their parental role (Johnston & Marsh, 1989).

The PSOC has demonstrated test–retest reliability (ranging between .75 and .88) and a significant inverse relationship with the Child Behavior Checklist (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Although consistently used in research, the PSOC has been criticized in the past for an unstable factor structure and lack of normative data. More recently in Australia, Gilmore and Cuskelly (2009) surveyed a non-clinical sample of 1,201 participants (615 fathers and 586 mothers) with the PSOC and implemented factor analysis to account for approximately half of the population variance across the three factors: Parenting Satisfaction, Efficacy, and Interest (or Engagement). Gilmore and Cuskelly found that mothers reported greater efficacy in the role of parent than fathers, and fathers had more satisfaction as parents. Gilmore and Cuskelly produced norms for at-risk research populations (e.g., teen mothers or divorcing parents) and introduced a new factor called Parenting Interest. Internal consistency for each of subscales is as follows: Satisfaction ($\alpha = .72$ for mother; $\alpha = .76$ for fathers), Efficacy ($\alpha = .68$ for mothers; $\alpha = .74$ for fathers), and Interest ($\alpha = .62$ for mothers; $\alpha = .57$ for fathers). Gilmore and Cuskelly's analysis showed that the PSOC demonstrated good reliability for the Parenting Satisfaction and Parenting Efficacy subscales, while the Parenting Interest subscale requires further validation. The PSOC also provides a sum score, which quantifies the overall construct of parental self-esteem which remains poorly validated in

the research (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009). In the present study, the PSOC was specifically adapted to contain a gender-neutral term—*parent* instead of *mother* or *father*. Additionally, general experiences of parenting were assessed as opposed to responses in relation to a target child (T. Jones & Prinz, 2005).

Data Analysis Procedure

The statistical analyses utilized in this study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of FamilyKind's New York State PEAP. The four research questions did not require multivariate analyses. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies were first reported. A series of one-way ANOVAs were used for the preliminary analysis and independent sample *t* tests were used for the main analyses. The analysis was limited in power due to the small size of the sample (46 total participants: 23 treatment group and 23 control group). The FKPS, which was used to assess parent conflict, child adjustment, and parenting attitudes and practices related to the PEAP curriculum, was not analyzed using inferential statistics because the psychometric properties of the instrument have yet to be evaluated. To examine the hypotheses for RQ4, four customer satisfaction items from the FKPS were evaluated using frequencies and mean scores from responses on the posttest. The three open-ended questions regarding participants' preferences for program content and comments were discussed anecdotally.

Individual ANOVAs for the co-variables surveyed were used for the preliminary analyses. This series of one-way factorial ANOVAs (*F* tests) were run to test group differences for the main hypotheses for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, while accounting for interactions between dependent variables, independent variable, and covariates. The dependent variables were co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy, as measured

by scores on the BMC and PSOC. The independent variable was the PDE approach (between groups), which had two levels: treatment group (received PEAP class) and control group. The individual-level factors, or covariates, included: age, gender, income, education, and number of children with former partner.

In the main analysis, independent sample *t* tests were conducted to examine the hypotheses for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The *t* tests compared means between groups, accounting for standard deviations and standard error of the means. The means of the BMC and PSOC were compared for the treatment group and control group. The assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were evaluated. The 3- and 6-month follow-up conditions were not directly compared due to insufficient sample sizes ($n < 20$ in each). The two follow-up conditions were instead combined (3–6 months post-intervention) to compare differences in scores on the BMC and PSOC between the treatment group and control group.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Demographic information including gender, age, ethnicity/race, educational level, income, as well as the number of biological children for each participant were collected at the time of the pretest and confirmed through the follow-up survey. All 46 parents who completed the study had children, with more than 93% of the sample having either one or two biological children with their former partner. Two control group members had three children and one parent participant reported having six children. There were 30 mothers and 16 fathers surveyed in total. In the treatment group, there were six males and 17 females; in the control group, there were 10 males and 13 females. Although 65% of the total sample was female ($n = 30$), there were no statistically significant differences between the groups based on gender. The age range of the sample spanned from 21 to 58, with an average of age 39 and mode of 35.

Regarding ethnicity/race, a majority of the sample (74 %) was Caucasian or White (non-Hispanic), and the remainder was evenly distributed among Black/African American (8.7%), Hispanic/Latino (8.7%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (8.7%). The majority of the sample was college-educated, with 89% ($n = 41$) having some college credits, an associate's, bachelor's, or post-graduate degree; the remaining 11% ($n = 5$) completed high school or trade/vocational training. The total sample was distributed relatively evenly across income levels, with 46% ($n = 21$) below \$90,000 and 54% ($n = 25$) having a household income over \$90,000 (see Table 1). The control group had a slightly more

skewed distribution, with only 40% ($n = 9$) reporting household incomes above \$90,000; in the treatment group, 70% ($n = 16$) of participants reported an income level over \$90,000.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	16	34.8
Female	30	65.2
Transgender		
Race/ethnicity		
Black/African American	4	8.7
Hispanic/Latino	4	8.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	8.7
Caucasian	34	73.9
Education		
High school/GED	3	6.5
Trade/technical school	2	4.3
Some college	7	15.2
Associate's degree	2	4.3
Bachelor's degree	20	43.5
Graduate degree	12	26.1
Income		
Up to \$29,999	6	13.0
\$30,000–\$59,999	7	15.2
\$60,000–\$89,999	8	17.4

\$90,000–\$119,999	7	15.2
\$120,000–\$149,999	4	8.7
\$150,000+	14	30.4
Number of children		
1	22	47.8
2	21	45.7
3	2	4.3
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	1	2.2

Preliminary Analyses

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine if there were statistical differences based on covariates (i.e., gender, education level, income, age, and number of children) for each of the dependent variables—co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy. There were no statistical differences found based on the covariates examined (see Table 2).

Table 2

Results of One-Way ANOVAs

	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
Co-Parenting			
Gender	.71	.41	.03
Age	1.87	.18	.06
Race/ethnicity	.84	.48	.08

Education	1.84	.14	.25
Income	1.15	.36	.17
Number of children	.49	.49	.02
Parenting Satisfaction			
Gender	.90	.35	.03
Age	.41	.53	.01
Race/ethnicity	1.10	.36	.11
Education	1.62	.19	.22
Income	1.12	.37	.17
Number of children	3.17	.09	.10
Parenting Efficacy			
Gender	.02	.90	< .01
Age	.34	.57	.01
Race/ethnicity	2.10	.12	.18
Education	.07	.60	.12
Income	.77	.58	.12
Number of children	2.10	.16	.07

Main Analyses

Three independent samples *t* tests were conducted to assess whether there were differences in co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy between the treatment and control groups. Student's *t* tests were run for co-parenting and parenting satisfaction. A Welch's *t* test was run for parenting efficacy due to unequal variances, which was determined based on results of Levene's test. As seen in Table 3, there were statistically significant differences for parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy. Participants in treatment group demonstrated higher levels of self-reported parenting satisfaction with a large effect size ($d = 1.43$) and self-reported parenting efficacy with a medium effect size ($d = 0.69$), as compared to the control group. However, for co-parenting, there were no statistically significant differences.

Frequencies were run to determine how participants responded to questions assessing their overall experiences of the PEAP program. Results suggested a high level of satisfaction based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Participants generally felt comfortable sharing their experiences with the class, found the program to be helpful, and would recommend the class to other divorcing or separating parents. Notably, all participants reported being satisfied on the whole with the FamilyKind class (see Table 4).

The three open-ended items administered at the end of the FamilyKind class were as follows:

1. "What parts of the FamilyKind class did you find most helpful?" Eighty-three percent of the treatment group responded to this question.

2. “What parts of the FamilyKind class did you find least helpful?” Fifty-seven percent of the treatment group responded to this question; of those who responded, 70% indicated that there were no unhelpful aspects of the program.

Table 3

Summary of t Tests

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
PSOC Total				1.40	-5.00	44
Control	66.04	10.58	2.21			
Treatment	80.92	9.54	1.99			
Satisfaction subscale				1.43	-4.85	44
Control	32.39	8.78	1.83			
Treatment	42.65	5.07	1.06			
Efficacy subscale				0.69	-2.28	44
Control	33.65	7.63	1.59			
Treatment	38.26	6.00	1.25			
BMC Total				0.03	0.13	44
Control	54.87	10.13	2.11			
Treatment	54.52	7.90	1.64			

Note. *N* = 46. BMC = Brief Measure of Co-Parenting; PSOC = Parenting Sense of Competence Scale.

Table 4

Reported Satisfaction Based on Four Feedback Items

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Total % in Agreement
1. I felt comfortable sharing my experiences and participating in the class	4.60	0.65	92
2. I came away from this program feeling more hopeful	4.39	0.94	87
3. Overall, I am satisfied with the FamilyKind class.	4.82	0.38	100
4. I would recommend the FamilyKind class to other divorcing or separating parents	4.56	0.65	92

Note. Total % in Agreement = responded 4 (*agree*) or 5 (*strongly agree*) on the Likert scale.

3. “Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.” Thirty-five percent of the treatment group responded to this item.

The responses overall were very positive. Participants found the video, facilitators, and their peers to be helpful. The following are examples of what participants reported as the most helpful aspects of the program:

- “The interaction between the legal and the social work perspective and the interaction and the sharing of other participants.”
- “Movie and discussion with other parents.”
- “Video, Lesley, Nancy—really everything.”
- “Most helpful was movie and court system by Lesley, overview of mental health, developmental stages.”
- “Hard to say—everything is helpful in its own way.”

- “Discussing how to best support our children and what our hurdles are.”
- “I found the video and 2nd part terrific and very informative.”

Among the few participants who provide constructive criticism, the following were aspects of the program they reported as least helpful:

- “Exposition, PowerPoint.”
- “Since I am already in court proceedings, I found the legal discussion on mediation, negotiation, etc. moot.”
- “Divorce process/divorce options.”
- “Sitting in a classroom environment.”

Finally, the following comments and recommendations to improve the program were left in response to the third open-ended item:

- “Teachers were great.”
- “Enjoyed class and presentation.”
- “Very nice!”
- “This is a great program and I will recommend it to friends in the future.”
- “I wish I came here sooner in the process.”
- “Overall the presenters were lovely, kind and knowledgeable”
- “Thank you!”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The preliminary analysis of variance controlled for gender, race/ethnicity, education level, income range, age, and number of children and found no significant interaction effects. Parents in this study who completed the FamilyKind class reported greater parenting satisfaction with a large effect size and greater parenting efficacy with a medium effect size, when compared to parents who had not completed the class. There were no significant differences in reported perceptions of co-parenting between the treatment and control group. This latter finding is not surprising given that previous studies have not found PDEs to directly improve aspects of co-parenting (e.g., less conflict, better cooperation) among divorcing parents (McKenry et al., 1999; Shifflett & Cummings, 1999). Despite the strongly held belief that positive outcomes for children of divorce are the product of healthy co-parenting relationships (Ahrons, 2007; Whiteside & Becker, 2000), in actuality the link between co-parenting and child outcomes is unclear.

Thus, there is a high level of uncertainty regarding whether positive co-parenting after divorce is more predictive of a child's adjustment than the combined impact of the quality of parenting provided by individual parents and level of interparental conflict (Sigal et al., 2011). Issues with measurement could have also explained the nonsignificant findings in the domain of co-parenting. Specifically, measures of interparental conflict and parenting style and their interactions with co-parenting were not examined in this study. Additionally, there are potential issues with how the construct of co-parenting itself is measured. Feinberg (2002) conceptualized

co-parenting as a dynamic construct made up of four domains: childrearing agreement, co-parental support/undermining, division of labor, and joint management of family dynamics (Feinberg, 2003). In this study, these domains were combined into a single measure (the BMC). Measuring these domains separately might have yielded different findings. As a more robust measure, the CRS (Feinberg, 2002) may have captured more aspects of adaptive co-parenting, which are measured to a lesser degree in the BMC.

After divorce, each parent's ability to establish individual practices to support their child (e.g., warmth, limit setting, relying on other relationships outside parent child triad) may be more predictive of positive child outcomes than the interparental relationship or co-parenting. For most couples in the first period following divorce, the minimization of conflict and initiation of high-quality individual parenting may be more appropriate and easily achieved than active co-parenting. Relatedly, other factors have also been found to account for conflict and quality in parenting outside the co-parenting relationship. For example, Sobolewski and King (2005) found that the amount of contact with the non-residential parent (father) moderated the level of interparental conflict and also predicted relationship quality (between father and child) after divorce.

Lamela, Figueiredo, Bastos, and Martins (2014) assessed whether co-parenting after divorce could impact a child's attachment, finding no significant association between children having a secure attachment pattern (e.g., children use their primary caregiver as a secure base and have confidence in their caregiver's availability to meet emotional needs) and parent's ratings across co-parenting domains. The majority (near 70%) of attachment patterns remain rather consistent throughout childhood and into adulthood (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999). Attachment in a child can be negatively affected by divorce; however, it appears that co-parenting alone

does not directly mitigate the feelings of abandonment that create an insecure attachment in a child of divorce (Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egelund, 2000). Therefore, higher levels of co-parenting might not be significant in predicting or changing attachment patterns to promote more advantageous child outcomes (Lamela et al., 2014).

Feinberg's framework considers co-parenting to be a "risk mechanism" that mediates interparental conflict and relationship quality between parents; however, the mechanism by which co-parenting activates better outcomes or resilience is still relatively unexplored. Specifically, in relation to the current study, the effects of positive co-parenting in the early post-divorce period remain underexamined. Feinberg's work shows that co-parenting can mitigate conflict, drawing associations with increased positive contact and quality of interactions between parents (Feinberg et al., 2012). However, further analysis is needed to explore whether co-parenting can be causally linked to positive outcomes in children beyond Feinberg's validation of the CRS. It may be important to focus further analysis on differences between mothers and fathers in co-parenting. Feinberg et al. (2012) found discrepancies in spouses' reporting, which may be related to factors outside the co-parenting paradigm including the following: communication styles, preceding parental expectations, and overall closeness between partners.

Another study by King and Sobolewski (2006) found that when a positive relationship was maintained with one parent (e.g., the non-residential father), there were less mental health issues reported than when a child maintained strained but close relationships with both parents. These findings similarly raise questions about the predictive power of co-parenting, instead emphasizing the importance of healthy relationships between the child and each parent. Finally, it may be safe to assume that levels of co-parenting are likely to vary over time. For instance, shortly after divorce or during the divorce process (a time when most PDEs are court ordered), a

parent may be less motivated to learn co-parenting skills. This may be due to the difficult transitions and demands of this period, including separation, environmental stressors, and emotional losses (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

In sum, co-parenting is a complex process that may vary over time and may be unique to each individual family system. Thus, co-parenting modifications may not be the most effective focus for short-term interventions during the divorce process, like PDEs. This is not say that co-parenting skills are not helpful for parents, but rather that brief psychoeducational programs may be more effective if they focus on short-term goals. For example, PDEs could focus on skills that can be learned in a one-time class, such as authoring a parenting plan document, conflict reduction strategies, an overview of stages of child development, or components of an effective parenting style (e.g., outlining authoritative parenting). Specialized longer-term interventions may be better equipped to address co-parenting skills and the diverse obstacles that arise within a family system (e.g., mental health, personality issues, and maladaptive relational patterns).

The positive effects shown in this study in the domains of self-reported parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy after completing the FamilyKind's NYS PEAP suggest the potential of this program to support parents' beliefs in their abilities to better care for their children in the wake of divorce. In the PSOC theoretical framework, self-reported satisfaction and competence combine to represent an overall rating of parental self-esteem. Although the construct of parental self-esteem still requires validation, it showed a large effect size in this study ($d = 1.40$). In validation studies of the PSOC, parental self-esteem has been reliably shown to positively correlate with parenting satisfaction and efficacy subscales (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009). The significantly higher ratings and sizable effects found in the treatment group in this study reassert the positive associations between parenting satisfaction and efficacy when measured by the PSOC.

The promotion of higher parenting satisfaction and efficacy after completing a PDE is hoped to be related to a parent's use of learned strategies when faced with stressful parental interactions in the post-divorce family system.

The large effect in this study found for parenting satisfaction in the treatment group provides evidence for positive program effects. Past research has found that fathers report less parenting satisfaction than mothers, reinforcing the traditional gender role investment in childcare and parenting responsibilities (Amato & Booth, 1995; Furstenberg & Harris, 1992; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Recently, research has found that fathers are more satisfied than mothers in the context of post-divorce parenting. The father's role post-divorce (likely the non-residential parent) includes custody arrangements maintaining the father as a caregiver, but limiting his time required in childrearing, ultimately allowing for less stress related to managing child behavior (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Roger & Matthews, 2004). McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider (2013) reviewed much of the seminal literature in the related field of father absence in which studies compared fathers from intact families to divorced fathers, marriages initiated after the birth of a child as compared to never married co-parents, and general comparisons between single-parent homes and homes with two parents residing regardless of marital history or status. These studies provide robust evidence that father absence accounts for social-emotional effects (e.g., internalizing and externalizing behaviors) in children and fathers throughout the lifespan. The role selection (level of physical and emotional presence as a parent) of the father has been found to significantly influence the family structure: With more invested or equitable custody arrangements, the father demonstrates higher role selection, which is associated with better child outcomes (McLanahan et al., 2013).

Given the lack of gender differences in the current study, role selection may play an integral part in fathers' satisfaction as modern gender roles increasingly provide less opportunity for fathers to defer to mothers in the provision of childcare. For both genders, then, the higher levels of parenting satisfaction and large effect in the group that attended the PDE class may be at least partially attributed to the strategies provided in FamilyKind's NYS PEAP. Satisfaction in parenting is itself an important predictor of positive child outcomes. A satisfied parent is an empowered parent who sees their influence on their child(ren) yielding better parent-child relationships. Higher levels of parenting satisfaction are integral to the emotional regulation needed to be an effective parent under the stressful transition of divorce (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Geisler et al., 2010). In parenting interventions, the goal of psychoeducation is to provide tools for a parent to feel more effective in their role. FamilyKind's PEAP's curriculum aims to achieve increased parenting satisfaction through framing divorce as an opportunity to change a parent's style or approach based on strategies that will benefit child well-being as well as foster better parent communication.

Higher ratings and effects of parental efficacy were reported in the group that completed the FamilyKind PEAP in comparison to controls who did not enroll in psychoeducation. This suggests that the PEAP positively influenced parents' beliefs in their own competence. The parents using the skills and strategies learned in FamilyKind's PEAP may be assumed to attain high parenting efficacy, which has been shown to minimize the strain on the parent-child relationship after divorce (Kerig, 2001). At the time of the follow-up (3-6 months), 78% of the parents in the treatment group were still in the divorce process ($n = 18$ participants). They reported high ratings of confidence and competence (parenting satisfaction, $M = 42.27$; parenting efficacy, $M = 37.00$) after taking the FamilyKind PEAP as compared to the control group. There is evidence

that high levels of parenting efficacy promote less parental alienation and encourage more positive parent–child interactions, which buffer against parental depression (Cohn & Campbell, 1992; Field, 2000; Forehand et al., 1988; N. A. Jones et al., 2000). It may follow that if former PEAP participants continued to utilize the conflict-resolution and communication skills learned in the program, then competence at engaging co-parenting alliances could continue to grow, buffering children from the negative effects of divorce over the long term.

In general, the participants in the treatment group gave positive written feedback about the program at the conclusion of the class. Overall, participants highly regarded FamilyKind and were satisfied with NYS PEAP class. A vast majority of these same participants felt comfortable sharing and participating in PEAP, as well as recommending the program to other divorcing parents. The majority of participants found facilitators to be helpful and expressed their gratitude for their kindness. Results were similar to those of prior PDE classes, as past participants overwhelmingly described their experiences as valuable and strongly recommended the program (McKenry et al., 1999; Schepard, 2000; Pedro-Carroll et al., 2001).

Divorce is a time for emotional reckoning and for most parents, there is a rich affective experience that accompanies the ending of a marriage. Parents feel loss, grief, anger, sadness, paralyzing anxiety, relief, hope, and even joy related to the complex divorce process (Amato, 2010). It is thus no surprise that even when engaging in an educational program focused on practical strategies, strong emotional responses can emerge in response to developing human connections. The surveys did not fully capture participants' feedback regarding the care that FamilyKind puts into creating a space where parents can find a positive reprieve from the guilt and shame associated with divorce. As self-report data can be limited for prediction, this author is including some observational findings obtained while studying FamilyKind. This evaluation

may be considered unremarkable in providing causal evidence for brief PDEs generating better outcomes for parents and children post-divorce; however, the feelings of optimism, support, and gratitude for the insight created in a school classroom by FamilyKind's implementation of the NYS PEAP is nothing short of remarkable.

Practical Implications for Intervention Development

This study sought to provide evidence on the efficacy of FamilyKind's NYS PEAP through a cross-sectional analysis. Surveys included measures of co-parenting, parenting satisfaction, and parenting efficacy. Prior studies have found that PDEs minimize interparental conflict, reduce the amount of litigation in the Family Court, increase awareness of children's needs in the post-divorce adjustment process, and improve cooperation with a former spouse (Fackrell et al., 2011). Although the current evaluation of FamilyKind's PEAP showed mixed results, it found positive evidence supporting parents' confidence to apply adaptive strategies to increase functioning when faced with the challenges of family dissolution. The intervention aims to teach adaptive parent functioning with strategies to improve child outcomes. An overarching aim of the current study was to inform the design of future FamilyKind programs.

Findings from this study indicated that participants who completed the PEAP class reported higher levels of parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy (i.e., competence and confidence in parenting) with sizable effects. It makes sense that a parent would feel more gratified and self-assured when reflecting upon their role after having taken a class that provides clear directives to aid decision-making post-divorce. Many parents are looking for guidance and reassurance that they are fulfilling their main function as a parent: to protect their child from harm and provide the necessary resources to thrive. PDEs give instruction to this exact end. Divorce and the family restructuring process leave every member of the family system vulnerable. The

tools in PEAP can provide guidance through the most nebulous and stressful aspects of the divorce process.

Notably, the current study found that PEAP did not have a direct impact on perceptions of co-parenting, a complex and multi-determined construct. This highlights an obstacle inherent to short-term interventions during the divorce process: The NYS PEAP may not be suited for long-term skills building, such as that needed to develop effective co-parenting strategies. Thus, PDEs classes may be more effective if they focus on short-term goals such as conflict resolution and teaching about different parenting styles. These are realistic and measurable goals that can be attained in one class. Individualized plans targeting specific parent–child interactions or relational problems should be saved for more long-term interventions.

NYS PEAP would benefit from greater expansion. Short-term PDEs often function better in conjunction with longer-term supports to address unhealthy relational or family dynamics. In states like Utah and Denver, divorce education is unilaterally prescribed for parents and allows for an orientation to the family court, as well as strategies to better inform positive parenting. NYS PEAP could be expanded to include prevention and planning initiatives to connect parents to the appropriate services. Expanding the types of programming and services offered by the family court under the umbrella of PDE could help to address the effects of divorce on children and the family system. A suggested pathway to greater efficacy is framing the PDE class as parents' first step in a series of services. Expanded programs could include additional classes and more parent-training; additionally, children could be included into some of the interventions. Brandon (2006) offered similar recommendations over a decade ago:

Facilitate an ongoing support group; create a virtual support group through a monitored chat room or question and answer forum; offer booster sessions at regular intervals following the initial class; provide a website with information that is pertinent to parenting through divorce; make proper referrals to other agencies or programs that may be able to help with issues not covered in class (e.g., anger management, alcohol and drug issues, and mental illness); offer an on-line or home study course that provides additional information; provide a program and/or support group for children of divorcing parents; develop a program for families going through divorce that could involve other members of the family system; provide a parent education program for stepfamilies; regularly provide parents with printed or electronic newsletters with topics about parenting through and beyond divorce; and/or include parents in other classes such as basic parenting, financial management, nutrition, and other topics that are of general interest. (p. 182)

In New York State, none of these suggestions have been implemented. In fact, shortly after Brandon's (2006) study was published, funding to parent education across the NYS Unified Court System was cut. FamilyKind and other private non-profit organizations have attempted to fill this gap in servicing the increasing needs of families struggling through the divorce process. Given the outcomes in this study, FamilyKind could potentially be directly incorporated into the family court as means of providing support services to divorcing couples.

Implications for the Field of School-Clinical Child Psychology

When divorce is viewed as an event by which to identify families whose children may experience a sequelae of related risk factors, the PDE intervention can be framed as a gatekeeping intervention similar to primary care medicine. As children are identified as having difficulty meeting developmental milestones, they should be referred to the appropriate support services.

When psychoeducation is offered through school settings it gives families access to services they may not otherwise seek out. PDE is specifically designed to improve the quality of parenting, but it can also have an impact on child outcomes, such as improving academic functioning and contributing to reductions in mental health and substance abuse problems (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 2005; Wolchik et al., 2002). School psychologists and counselors should be informed about local PDE programs and consider them in making recommendations to families. Clinical child psychologists should consider PDE programs as a referral resource for families dealing with the divorce process.

Limitations and Future Directions

As this was a pilot study, the results should be considered as preliminary. Cross-sectional designs limit the ability to draw conclusions about the causal impact of an intervention. The small sample size lowered statistical power. Further, data were based on participant self-report, which can lead to social desirability bias (Paulhus, 2002). As expected, response rates in this study were low: 25% for treatment group and 21% for control group. However, this is not uncommon in research studying the effects of divorce and other stigmatized areas of inquiry (Fincham, 2008).

Despite the limitations this study, FamilyKind's PEAP appears to be a promising intervention for parents in the divorce process. In particular, parents who participated in the program reported higher ratings of parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy (i.e., confidence in the quality of their parenting) than parents who did not participate in the program. Findings support the efficacy of this short-term psychoeducational intervention. Future studies could include additional follow-up points to examine the long-term impact of PEAP. They could also examine the impact of the program on parenting interest (role selection) and parenting performance,

which were not directly examined in this study. More psychometrically sound measures could be used to assess the impact of PDE programs on parenting satisfaction, parenting efficacy, interparental conflict, role selection, and co-parenting. In addition to more rigorous measures, observational data could also be included in future investigations. A larger randomized sample within a validated pre/posttest design would help to improve the generalizability of findings.

Future research could further evaluate the efficacy of PDE programs. The expansion of the short-term psychoeducational class into a more preventative or systems approach with direct referrals to long-term support services requires research with larger samples and rigorous randomized controlled trials. Research targeting the coordination of services should be prioritized in areas where most parents require support. These future evaluations could also look at parents' motivation to attend FamilyKind's PEAP and other PDE programs as they are influenced by the referral source (most participants are ordered to attend by family court judges), which may impact their investment in the research and attrition rates. The present study emphasized that parents laboring through the many ardors of family dissolution initially respond to individualized strategies that allow them to parent more effectively rather than more complicated engagements like co-parenting or family system restructuring. Expanding the focus of research to address parent alienation, gatekeeping, and mental health symptomology would better inform more intensive interventions, as well as allow for referral to appropriate levels of treatment. The design and timing of post-divorce intervention should mirror the incremental process of rebuilding one's life in aftermath of marital dissolution. Finally, a reliability and validity analysis of the FamilyKind Parenting Survey would be particularly helpful, and could be used to evaluate longitudinal outcomes.

Conclusion

PDE programs continue to have massive potential to improve outcomes for adults and children navigating separation and divorce. They remain cost-effective as well as easy to set up, allowing for large-scale implementation across populations and settings. In this study, FamilyKind's NYS PEAP had a positive effect on divorcing parents' reported levels of parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy. There were no reported changes in domain of co-parenting. However, past research has shown that longer-term interventions may be necessary to effect changes in co-parenting relationships (Cookston, Braver, Griffin, DeLusé, & Miles, 2007). Similar to past evaluations of FamilyKind's PEAP, this study demonstrated that the program had a positive impact on parents divorcing in New York. Future longitudinal studies with more rigorous experimental designs could further substantiate the specific program components that contribute to improved parenting satisfaction and parenting efficacy. Ongoing examination of FamilyKind's NYS PEAP will help inform program modifications, ultimately helping to improve parenting and child outcomes for families in the divorce process. As Frazee et al. (2016) stated in the NYS PEAP *Parent Handbook*, "The message of parent education is one of hope and empowerment—there are ways that you can help your children to not only survive, but thrive after a break up" (p. 11).

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APPENDIX A

PRETEST/TIME 1 SURVEY FOR TREATMENT GROUP

Please circle the number that best corresponds to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I say negative things about my other parent in the presence of our child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5
12. I ask our child(ren) to send messages to my other parent.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I am having a difficult time adjusting to the separation or divorce.	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best corresponds to your view using the following scale:

	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
14. To what extent do you and your other parent argue about:					
• Child(ren) rearing	1	2	3	4	5
• Time Spent with child(ren)	1	2	3	4	5
• Child(ren)'s Financial Support	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that best corresponds to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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15. There are things I, as a parent, can do to help our child(ren) from having problems after a breakup.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Telling our child(ren) the extensive details about the breakup, including the faults of the other parent, can have a negative effect on our child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5
17. It is important for one parent to follow healthy parenting practices even if the other parent is uncooperative.	1	2	3	4	5
18. A child's anger or sadness after his or her parents' separation or divorce is normal.	1	2	3	4	5
19. It is okay for our child(ren) to express their feelings about their other parent regardless of whether those feelings are positive or negative.	1	2	3	4	5
20. It is important for our child(ren) to have a relationship with both parents, except in cases where contact would be harmful.	1	2	3	4	5
21. It is okay to have our child(ren) bring messages or convey information to the other parent on my behalf.	1	2	3	4	5
22. If I, as a parent, am facing problems due to divorce or separation, it is okay for me to seek help from a professional.	1	2	3	4	5
23. It is okay for me, as a parent, to question our child(ren) about the other parent's private life.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY FOR TREATMENT GROUP

Questionnaire: Time 2 (Post Class)

Please circle the number that best corresponds to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Dis- agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. There are things I, as a parent, can do to help our child(ren) from having problems after a breakup.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Telling our child(ren) the extensive details about the breakup, including the faults of the other parent, can have a negative effect on our child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5
3. It is important for one parent to follow healthy parenting practices even if the other parent is uncooperative.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A child's anger or sadness after his or her parent's separation or divorce is normal.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It is okay for our child(ren) to express their feelings about their other parent regardless of whether those feelings are positive or negative.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is important for our child(ren) to have a relationship with both parents, except in cases where contact would be harmful.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It is okay to have our child(ren) bring messages or convey information to the other parent on behalf.	1	2	3	4	5

8. If I, as a parent, am facing problems due to divorce or separation, it is okay for me to seek help from a professional.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is okay for me, as a parent, to question our child(ren) about the other parent's private life.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I felt comfortable sharing my experiences and participating in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I came away from this program feeling more hopeful.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Overall, I am satisfied with the FamilyKind class.	1	2	3	4	5
13. As a result of the FamilyKind class, I learned valuable information about the legal process.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would recommend the FamilyKind class to other divorcing or separating parents.	1	2	3	4	5

15. What parts of the FamilyKind class did you find most helpful?

16. What parts of the FamilyKind class did you find least helpful?

17. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

Thank You!
We will be contacting you in the coming months for a follow-up.

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP/TIME 2 SURVEY FOR TREATMENT GROUP

Please indicate that you are fluent in English, you fully understand the information provided about this study and confirm or deny your willingness to participate in this study below.

I am fluent in English, fully understand the information provided about this study and am willing to participate in this study:

- YES
- NO

Please **click** the response that **best corresponds** to the following questions:

1. Your gender:

- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Genderqueer
- Prefer not to Reply

2. Your race/ethnicity:

- Black or African-American
- Hispanic/Latin(o/a)
- Asian/ Pacific Islander
- Alaska Native
- Caucasian
- More than one race (Please specify which in space below)
- Other

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Prefer not to Reply

3. Age (Please specify a number):

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*

- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (For example: GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Trade / Technical / Vocational Training
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's, professional or doctoral degree

Please **click** the response that **best corresponds** to the following questions:

- | | YES | NO |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 5. Are you currently living with your child(ren)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Are you currently living with your child(ren)'s other parent? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Have you ever been married to your child(ren)'s other parent? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Are you currently married to your child(ren)'s other parent? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. Length of time since you and your child(ren)'s other parent physically separated:

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Not Separated	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	3 to 5 years	More than 5 years	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>					

10. Length of time since the current court case was filed/started:

Not Separated	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	3 to 5 years	More than 5 years	Not Applicable
<input type="radio"/>					

11. What was your household income prior to separation?

- \$0-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000-\$119,999
- \$120,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000+

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. I say negative things about my child(ren)'s other parent in the presence of our child(ren).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I ask our child(ren) to send messages to my child(ren)'s other parent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I am having a difficult time adjusting to the separation or divorce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15. I have seen a positive change in our child(ren) since the original survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Our children's well being has improved since the original survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to your view using the following scale:

17. To what extent do you and your child(ren)'s other parent argue about:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
• Child(ren) rearing	<input type="radio"/>				
• Time Spent with child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>				
• Child(ren)'s financial Support	<input type="radio"/>				

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18. There are things I, as a parent, can do to help my child(ren) from having problems after a breakup.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Telling our child(ren) the extensive details about the breakup, including the faults of my child(ren)'s other parent, can have a negative effect on our child(ren).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. It is important for one parent to follow healthy parenting practices even if the other parent is uncooperative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. A child's anger or sadness after his or her parents' separation or divorce is normal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. It is okay for our child(ren) to express their feelings about their other parent regardless of whether those feelings are positive or negative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. It is important for our child(ren) to have a relationship with both parents, except in cases where contact would be harmful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. It is okay to have our child(ren) bring messages or convey information to their other parent on my behalf.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. If I, as a parent, am facing problems due to divorce or separation, it is okay for me to seek help from a professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. It is okay for me, as a parent, to question our child(ren) about their other parent's private life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Listed below are a number of statements. **Please respond to each item**, indicating your level of **agreement or disagreement** with each statement. **Please read items including (mother/father) with**

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	Not true 0	1	A little bit true 2	3	Somewhat true 4	5	Very true 6
48. My partner and I have the same goals for our child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49. My partner and I have different ideas about how to raise our child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50. My partner tries to show that she or he is better than me at caring for our child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51. My partner does not carry his or her fair share of the parenting work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. My partner undermines my parenting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53. My partner and I are growing and maturing together through experiences as parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. My partner appreciates how hard I work at being a good parent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55. My partner makes me feel like I'm best possible parent for our child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often in a typical week, when you are communicating with your child(ren)'s other parent, do you:

Never 0	1	Sometimes 2	3	Often 4	5	Very often 6
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APPENDIX D

PRETEST/TIME 1 SURVEY FOR CONTROL GROUP

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Please indicate that you are fluent in English, you fully understand the information provided about this study and confirm or deny your willingness to participate in this study below.

I am fluent in English, fully understand the information provided about this study and am willing to participate in this study:

- YES
 NO

Please click the response that best corresponds to the following questions:

1. Your gender:

- Male
 Female
 Transgender Male
 Transgender Female
 Genderqueer
 Prefer not to Reply

2. Your race/ethnicity:

- Black or African-American
 Hispanic/Latin(o/a)
 Asian/ Pacific Islander
 Alaska Native
 Caucasian
 More than one race (Please specify which in space below)

 Other
 Prefer not to Reply

3. Age (Please specify a number):

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11. Length of time since the current court case was filed/started:

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Not Separated | Less than 1 year | 1 to 2 years | 3 to 5 years | More than 5 years | Not Applicable |
| <input type="radio"/> |

12. What was your household income prior to separation?

- \$0-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000-\$119,999
- \$120,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000+

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

- | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 13. I say negative things about my child(ren)'s other parent in the presence of our child(ren). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. I ask our child(ren) to send messages to my child(ren)'s other parent. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. I am having a difficult time adjusting to the separation or divorce. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds to your view** using the following scale:

16. To what extent do you and your child(ren)'s other parent argue about:

- | | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Frequently |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| • Child(ren) Rearing | <input type="radio"/> |

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	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
• Time Spent with Child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>				
• Child(ren)'s Financial Support	<input type="radio"/>				

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. There are things I, as a parent, can do to help my child(ren) from having problems after a breakup.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Telling our child(ren) the extensive details about the breakup, including the faults of the child(ren)'s other parent, can have a negative effect on our child(ren).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. It is important for one parent to follow healthy parenting practices even if the other parent is uncooperative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. A child's anger or sadness after his or her parents' separation or divorce is normal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. It is okay for our child(ren) to express their feelings about their other parent regardless of whether those feelings are positive or negative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. It is important for our child(ren) to have a relationship with both parents, except in cases where contact would be harmful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. It is okay to have our child(ren) bring messages or convey information to their other parent on my behalf.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. If I, as a parent, am facing problems due to divorce or separation, it is okay for me to seek help from a professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. It is okay for me, as a parent, to question our child(ren) about their other parent's private life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP/TIME 2 SURVEY FOR CONTROL GROUP

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I say negative things about my child(ren)'s other parent in the presence of our child(ren).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I ask our child(ren) to send messages to my child(ren)'s other parent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am having a difficult time adjusting to the separation or divorce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I have seen a positive change in our child(ren) since the original survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Our children's well being has improved since the original survey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to your view using the following scale:

6. To what extent do you and your child(ren)'s other parent argue about:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
• Child(ren) rearing	<input type="radio"/>				
• Time Spent with child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>				
• Child(ren)'s financial Support	<input type="radio"/>				

Please **click** the bubble that **best corresponds** to what extent you **disagree or agree** with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. There are things I, as a parent, can do to help my child(ren) from having problems after a breakup.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Telling our child(ren) the extensive details about the breakup, including the faults of my child(ren)'s other parent, can have a negative effect on our child(ren).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. It is important for one parent to follow healthy parenting practices even if the other parent is uncooperative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. A child's anger or sadness after his or her parents' separation or divorce is normal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11/8/2017

Qualtrics Survey Software

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. It is okay for our child(ren) to express their feelings about their other parent regardless of whether those feelings are positive or negative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. It is important for our child(ren) to have a relationship with both parents, except in cases where contact would be harmful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. It is okay to have our child(ren) bring messages or convey information to their other parent on my behalf.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. If I, as a parent, am facing problems due to divorce or separation, it is okay for me to seek help from a professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. It is okay for me, as a parent, to question our child(ren) about their other parent's private life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Listed below are a number of statements. **Please respond to each item**, indicating your level of **agreement or disagreement** with each statement. **Please read items including (mother/father) with your appropriate title of mother or father.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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APPENDIX F
PEAP INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

THE EFFICACY OF DIVORCE EDUCATION: EVALUATING FAMILYKIND'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW YORK STATE PARENT EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAM (PEAP)

Thank you for your interest in participating in a study being conducted by Pace University on The Efficacy of Divorce Education: Evaluating FamilyKind's Implementation of the New York State Parent Education and Awareness Program (PEAP). This document informs you about the procedures and possible risks and benefits of participation. All participants must have completed the New York State Parent Education and Awareness Program. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study and have children. By consenting to be a participant in this study you will be giving authorization (permission) to use information previously collected from you by FamilyKind as well as information that will be collected in the future through surveys. This information will be de-identified and held in a confidential database only to be used for purposes of research and training at Pace University and FamilyKind, LLC. Any communication made by you (the participant) shall be confidential and shall not be available for evidentiary use in any legal action or court proceeding. The information you provide will be protected and confidential and in no way divulged to attorneys or mediators representing the participants, the attorney(s) for their children, and the other party (e.g., other parent) or the court.

PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

This study involves filling out three 10-minute questionnaires over the course of several months. A first set of 10 questions involves demographic information, including your age, race/ethnicity, education, as well as 13 questions regarding your opinions on parenting and divorce/child custody litigation. A second set of questions, which you will respond to after participating in the program, will address some of your experiences with parenting and divorce/separation as well as, some feedback directed toward the experience in the PEAP. This questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes of your time. The third questionnaire is a follow-up survey, which will be sent either: 3, 6 or 9 months after the completion of the program. Participants who have previously completed the PEAP will receive the follow-up surveys earlier. There are no right or wrong answers to any these questions.

COMPENSATION

There is **NO** compensation or other payment for you for taking part in this study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to stop participating in the study at any time. Deciding not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. Your participation will not affect

your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project. You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your willingness to continue taking part in this study. You may also choose to consult with family members or other advisors on your participation before you decide to participate in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

As a research participant, you will not directly benefit from this research. However, you may find that participation gives you some time to reflect on experiences of parenting and divorce/separation, which may prove beneficial.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Description of Risks: Participation in this study involves minimal to no risk. You are being asked to complete confidential electronic or paper and pencil surveys. These surveys take minimal time and require you to provide basic information or rate/ describe your thoughts and feelings. While being asked about parenting during the divorce/separation or custody resolution process may bring up upsetting feelings, this is not expected to be beyond what is experienced in daily life through the divorce/custody litigation process. Should you want to discuss feelings or thoughts with a professional, we will provide you with referral sources.

PROCEDURES FOR MINIMIZING RISK

You are, again, reminded that if you feel any distress or discomfort from completing the surveys that you are a voluntary participant and may discontinue your participation at any time.

Staff Training: The researchers on this project have been trained by accredited programs and by senior researchers to uphold confidentiality and protect the identity of all research subjects.

Protection of Privacy: Your research records are confidential. Your name or other personally identifying information will not be used in reports or publications resulting from this study. Group, rather than individual results, will be reported. All questionnaire and qualitative responses will be identified by code numbers rather than by names and will be kept in secure files. Any document with identifying information – including this signed consent form – will be kept separate from data, so that they cannot be linked.

STUDY CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY OR TO REPORT A PROBLEM

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pace University has approved the solicitation of subjects for this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Sponsored Research at (212) 346-1273.

The Principle Investigator for the research is James Grimaldi, MEd. Mr. Grimaldi can be reached at (917) 589.3373 or jg49278n@pace.edu. If you require any additional information about this study before deciding whether to participate, you may contact Mr. Grimaldi or the project advisor Dr. Leora Trub, PhD at (212) 346.1852 or ltrub@pace.edu.

TO REPORT A COMPLAINT OR TALK ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS IN THE STUDY: If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you feel you have experienced research-related injuries you should contact the Office of Sponsored Research at (212) 346-1273.