

FORMER SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILDREN'S POST-DIVORCE WELL-BEING

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LITERATURE REVIEW

- Family life educators promote children's post-divorce resiliency by providing post-divorce education programs and resources for parents and children (Fackrell et al., 2011; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008)
- Divorce education programs focus on cooperative coparenting relationships (Sigal et al., 2011)
- Researchers have suggested post-divorce education programs expand foci to include information about other dimensions of former spouses' on-going relationships (Amato et al., 2011; Russell et al., 2016)

STUDY PURPOSE

- To determine which aspects of former spousal relationships were associated with children's and youths' post-divorce well-being.
- Focused on six aspects of formal spousal relationships:
 - Cooperative coparenting General communication between former spouses
 - Boundary ambiguity Frequency of former spousal communication
 - Satisfaction with child support Satisfaction with custody arrangements

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Research question 1:** Which aspects of former spousal relationships are associated with child and youth well-being?
- **Research question 2:** Are there differences in the patterns of associations between former spousal relationships and child well-being for children (4- to 9-years-old) and youth (10- to 18-years-old)?

METHODS

- Sample recruited through Amazon MTurk
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Adults with at least one child, 18-years-old or younger
 - Divorced from that child's other parent
- Sample consists of 731 divorced individuals

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- Participant Sex:
 - 51.7% Female
 - 48.3% Male
- Majority had household income between \$30,000 and \$74,999
- Separated average of 4.67 years
- Children were an average of 10-years-old
- Child Sex:
 - 59.2% Male
 - 40.8% Female

MEASURES

- Post-divorce coparenting communication (Ahrons, 1981; 5-items)
- General communication with former spouses (Ahrons, 1981; 13-items)
- Boundary ambiguity (Boss et al., 1990; 21-items)
- Satisfaction with custody arrangement
- Satisfaction with child support
- Child well-being (Goodman, 2001)
 - Prosocial behavior (4-items)
 - Externalizing behavior (8-items)
 - Internalizing behavior (9-items)
- Demographics

CHILD SAMPLE RESULTS

Hierarchical Regression Models for Children's Well-Being (N = 339)

Variables	Prosocial Behavior			Externalizing Behavior			Internalizing Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
Cooperative coparenting	0.13	0.03	.25***	-0.02	0.02	-.07	-0.08	0.02	-.21***
Former spouse comm	-0.08	0.05	-.12	0.08	0.03	.17*	0.17	0.03	.37***
Boundary ambiguity	-0.11	0.06	-.14	0.18	0.04	.31***	0.15	0.03	.26***
Frequency of comm	0.01	0.02	.04	-0.02	0.01	-.09	-0.00	0.01	-.02
Custody satisfaction	0.07	0.04	.12	-0.02	0.02	-.06	-0.01	0.02	-.03
Child support satisfaction	-0.01	0.03	-.03	-0.04	0.02	-.14*	-0.02	0.02	-.06
ΔR^2	.092***			.186***			.234***		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

YOUTH SAMPLE RESULTS

Hierarchical Regression Models for Youths' Well-Being (N = 392)

Variables	Prosocial Behavior			Externalizing Behavior			Internalizing Behavior		
	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
Cooperative coparenting	0.03	0.03	.07	-0.03	0.02	-.09	-0.03	0.02	-.09
Former spouse comm	-0.03	0.05	-.04	-0.03	0.04	-.06	0.05	0.04	.09
Boundary ambiguity	-0.19	0.60	-.22**	0.24	0.04	.38***	0.17	0.04	.26***
Frequency of comm	0.03	0.02	.12	-0.00	0.01	-.01	-0.02	0.01	-.14*
Custody satisfaction	-0.05	0.03	-.12	0.02	0.02	.06	-0.04	0.02	-.12
Child support satisfaction	0.06	0.02	.17**	-0.03	0.02	-.12	-0.02	0.02	-.07
ΔR^2	.075***			.108***			.121***		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION

- Children's well-being associated with:
 - Cooperative coparenting
 - General communication with former spouse
 - Boundary ambiguity
 - Satisfaction with child support
- Youth well-being associated with:
 - Boundary ambiguity
 - Satisfaction with child support
 - Frequency of former spousal communication

IMPLICATIONS

- Family life educators should vary the content of divorce education programs based on the age of the participants' children
- Educators should focus on additional aspects of former spousal relationships:
 - Transitioning from married couples to partners in childrearing
 - Establishing and maintaining new communication boundaries
 - Establishing identities independent from former spouses

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