

Preventive Intervention With Adolescents and Divorced Mothers: A Conceptual Framework for Program Design and Evaluation

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This article highlights the need for an empirically based, developmentally relevant program for adolescents and their divorced mothers. A conceptual framework for program development and evaluation is then proposed for preventive intervention efforts designed to reduce the prevalence of maladjustment in adolescents in single divorced-mother families and increase effective functioning of the mothers in those families. Attention is given to applied use of the growing literature on linkages between divorce and adolescent adjustment, and particularly to the role of several family processes in adolescents' postdivorce adjustment: maternal expectations, discipline, decision making, and parent-adolescent relationships.

Adolescence today is broadly perceived as a more difficult and dangerous period than it has been previously. Those holding this view focus on increases in teenage pregnancy and childbearing, school dropout, alcohol abuse, juvenile violence and arrests, depression, and suicide as evidence of changing conditions. Although uncommon in childhood, these problems increase in early adolescence, and they can lead to greater likelihood of negative developmental trajectories in late adolescence and young adulthood. This decline in the well-being of youth has been attributed by some to a deterioration in the family circumstances of adolescents (Uhlenberg & Eggebeen, 1986). Parental separation and divorce have become common experiences for children in the United States. For the last three decades, there have been increasing numbers of divorced parent households, and at current rates, 50% to 60% of all children born in the early 1980s will live with only one parent for at least a year before reaching the age of 18

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years (e.g., Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Martin & Bumpass, 1989).

This article first presents a rationale for intervention with the adolescents and families who have experienced this common transition. Program efforts for divorced families are then discussed, and the need for an empirically based, developmentally relevant program for adolescents and their divorced, but not remarried, mothers is highlighted. Based on this gap in programming and evaluation, a conceptual framework for program development and evaluation is then proposed. Attention is given to applied use of the growing literature on linkages between divorce and adolescent adjustment, and particularly to the role of several family processes in adolescents' postdivorce adjustment.

For a substantial minority of children in divorced families, adolescence is a period of less than optimal growth characterized by increases in substance abuse, truancy, depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior, and a decline in academic performance. However, for many others, it is a time of enhanced responsibility, mature self-reliance, and identification with positive goals and values. Why do some adolescents adapt successfully to parental divorce whereas others experience serious difficulties? What characteristics of divorced families are associated with increases or decreases in adjustment during the normative transitions of adolescence (e.g., the junior high school transition)? Despite the profusion of literature on divorce, the focus on the features of the family environment that lead to maladaptive outcomes or successful adjustment for individual adolescents is relatively recent.

In the past decade, interparental conflict, parent-adolescent relationships, family decision making, and parental monitoring and control have received increasing attention as mediators of divorce effects on adolescent adjustment (Amato, 1993; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1992; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Emery, 1988; Forgatch, Patterson, & Skinner, 1988; Forehand, McCombs, Long, Brody, & Fauber, 1988; Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington et al., 1992; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Steinberg, 1987). This process-oriented research has yielded information about possible family practices one could target to prevent adverse outcomes or promote healthy development of adolescents in divorced families. However, the extent to which preventive intervention programs are guided by these findings from basic research on mediating processes is limited (Grych & Fincham, 1992). There is an increasing call for using basic and applied research in complementary ways to develop empirically based programs and to use evaluation studies to inform basic research (Kazdin, 1992). More specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the experiment plays a critical role in understanding the relation between aspects of the environment and development in an individual, because one can discover the impact of changes in the environment by manipulating them and then observing how the individual is affected. Applied to divorce research, this idea suggests that family characteristics hypothesized to facilitate positive development could be targeted in an inter-

vention program, and subsequent indices of adolescent adjustment could then be examined for change.

Although there are numerous programs for children of divorce, none have been developed to specifically target the developmental capacities or requirements of *adolescents* and their mothers. Adolescence is receiving increasing recognition as a crucial, yet understudied, developmental period, during which it may be possible to prevent the establishment of damaging patterns and assist in promoting a healthy transition into adulthood (Barber & Crockett, 1993; Dryfoos, 1990; Hamburg, 1993; Kazdin, 1993; Susman, Koch, Maney, & Finkelstein, 1993; Takanishi, 1993b). As pointed out in the W.T. Grant Foundation (1988) report *The Forgotten Half*, many youth have a difficult time with the transition into adulthood. This is particularly true for those who have gotten involved in problem or risky behaviors during their adolescent years. Although some of these youth ultimately find a niche for themselves, many have great difficulty achieving this goal.

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by changes in all social contexts as well as dramatic individual changes in physiology and cognitive capabilities (Petersen, 1987). Early adolescence is an optimal time to intervene given the nature, quantity, and potential synchrony of normative and nonnormative developmental transitions (Rice, Herman, & Petersen, 1993; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Because young adolescents are at the age when potentially harmful situations are surfacing, they are a particularly important target group for interventions designed to prevent or delay the onset of negative pathways (Crockett & Petersen, 1993). The transition into adulthood is likely to be particularly difficult for youth who have experienced less than optimal development during early and middle adolescence. Programs developed for youth at risk need to incorporate basic knowledge about adolescent development into the design, acknowledging the capabilities as well as the needs of adolescents of different ages (Hamburg, Millstein, Mortimer, Nightingale, & Petersen, 1993; Lerner, 1993). In addition to endorsing the focus on developmental vulnerabilities and strengths, Felner and Felner (1989) argued that we cannot continue to develop programs that do not attend to the ecological contexts in which they are mounted. For adolescents with divorced parents, the family is a logical and essential context to include in prevention efforts. In particular, the custodial parent (most often the mother) should be a primary consideration in program implementation.

Despite being a time of heightened autonomy needs, as well as of increasing susceptibility to influence from peer networks, early adolescence is still a period in which family influences are important, making it ideal for programs that target both the youth and the parent. Parent-child relationships are transformed during adolescence as family members renegotiate authority patterns toward mutuality (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Adolescents have been shown to fare better in family environments that are responsive to their developing need for autonomy (Eccles et al., 1993; Flanagan, 1985; Yee, 1987). Takanishi (1993a) called for

the provision of preventive interventions during the transition from childhood to adulthood specifically targeting the renegotiations of parent–adolescent relationships. Others recommend that promotion or prevention efforts should include parental involvement and seek to strengthen the parent–adolescent relationship (Crockett & Petersen, 1993; Perry, Kelder, & Komro, 1993; Rickel & Allen, 1987).

In all family types, early adolescence is a challenging developmental period for family members, as parent–child relationships are renegotiated to reflect the increasing maturity of the adolescent (Lerner, 1993; Petersen, 1988). Because residential divorced mothers who have not remarried are the sole adult authority figure in the home, they are likely to face special difficulties in parenting during their children's transition to adolescence (Montemayor, 1984; Small, 1990). Decision making, responsibility, discipline, and communication are central family issues at this time, and with a postdivorce realignment of parental authority, there are distinct challenges, but also unique opportunities in parenting an adolescent alone (Barber & Eccles, 1992; Barber & Lyons, 1995). Thus, divorced mothers and their early adolescent children are an especially important target population for education and training. Divorce intervention programs that do not include the parent will not provide the multicontext support for youth development available when the mother is included as a central figure. Grych and Fincham (1992) suggested that developing parallel groups for parents and children may be the most effective way to impact postdivorce family processes. However, despite the importance of involving parents, divorce intervention programs are usually school based, and target the individual child.

INTERVENTIONS

In this section, existing programs for divorced families are reviewed. First, programs targeting children in divorced families are presented. Second, programs designed particularly for divorced mothers are discussed. Finally, because parenting practices can influence adjustment in divorced families, and programs for divorced mothers have generally not focused on parenting adolescents, non-divorce related programs for families with adolescents are considered.

Child-Focused Divorce Programs

Most intervention programs for children of divorce have been school based to maximize availability for children, and have educational as well as therapeutic goals for the children (e.g., Kalter, Pickar, & Lesowitz, 1984; Kalter & Schreier, 1993; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985; Roseby & Deutsch, 1985; Stolberg & Cullen, 1983). One of these programs (Kalter et al., 1993) has been disseminated quite broadly, across 43 states and several countries (Kalter et al., personal communication, September 13, 1993). However, the extent to which programs are evaluated is quite limited (Grych & Fincham, 1992). The one existing evalua-

tion of Kalter's program did indicate some effectiveness of the fourth- to sixth-grade component, but that study has yet to be published, and did not include implementation checks (Rubin, 1990).

Two notable exceptions to the evaluation gap are Stolberg and colleagues' Divorce Adjustment Project (DAP) for children and single parents (Stolberg & Cullen, 1983; Stolberg & Garrison, 1985; Stolberg & Walsh, 1988), and Pedro-Carroll and Cowen's (1985) Children of Divorce Intervention Project (CODIP). The two programs target intrapersonal processes and resources. Both the DAP and CODIP are based on the assumptions that divorce is a stressful event in children's lives, and that postdivorce adjustment can be facilitated by teaching cognitive-behavioral skills and providing emotional support. In particular, they emphasize acquiring specific competencies for dealing with divorce-related challenges.

The DAP consists of two components: the Child Support Group (CSG) and the Single Parent Support Group (SPSG, described in next section on parent-focused programs). The CSG is a 12-session psychoeducational support group for 7- to 13-year-olds to help them deal with the behavioral and emotional demands of the divorce. Part 1 of the 1-hr sessions involved discussion of specific topics; Part 2 focused on teaching, modeling, and rehearsing specific skills. The DAP has been evaluated using four groups: child as participant, parent as participant, child and parent together, and a no-treatment control group (Stolberg & Garrison, 1985). The immediate postgroup evaluation indicated higher self-esteem in the child-only group, and at the 5-month follow-up, this same group showed more positive social skills. Nonrandom assignment and pre-existing group differences (combined group children were better adjusted prior to the program) may have accounted for less improvement in the combined group.

The CODIP was based on the CSG, but places more emphasis on emotional support, divorce-related feelings, less on anger control, and relies more on experiential exercises such as discussions and role plays. The evaluation of this program has been extensive, beginning with an initial field trial with fourth- to sixth-grade children that found benefits in conduct, adjustment, and anxiety (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). A replication (Pedro-Carroll, Cowen, Hightower, & Guare, 1986) supported CODIP's role in enhancing postdivorce adjustment. CODIP has also been modified for use with younger, urban children to reflect the developmental and sociocultural characteristics of the sample. This extension supported the program's contribution to improved child outcomes for the more heterogeneous young sample (Alpert-Gillis, Pedro-Carroll, & Cowen, 1989).

These two stress and coping interventions have proven to be quite promising for children of divorce. However, despite the strengths of the CSG and CODIP, they are limited to children. Like children, some adolescents show signs of negative adjustment following divorce, but they have generally not been targeted for group intervention. Hodges (1991) described his work on a 10-week junior

high school therapeutic program based on group discussion, but no evaluation was included. Similarly, Kalter and his colleagues (Kalter et al., 1993) published a program manual for seventh- to ninth-grade adolescents, but has no evaluation data available for that age group (Kalter, 1993, personal communication). Thus, there is a pressing need to formulate and evaluate developmentally appropriate programs for adolescents in divorced-mother families.

Parent-Focused Divorce Programs

Although there are no programs specifically for adolescents and their divorced mothers, there are some programs for divorced mothers. The two types of intervention for these single women target either the woman's own adjustment to the divorce and/or single parenting (individual-level focus), or the efficacy of her parenting practices (family-environment focus).¹ Those programs aimed at adjustment of the single mother, and not directly at modifying parenting behaviors, are based on the assumption that better adjustment in the mother will lead to better parenting. One such program is the Single Parent Support Group (SPSG; Stolberg & Garrison, 1985; Stolberg & Walsh, 1988), which is a 12-week support program for divorced custodial mothers. Evaluation results show that participants displayed better divorce adjustment than those who did not receive the program. However, child adjustment was not affected. In their review of the few community-based programs for single parents, Stolberg and Walsh (1988) concluded that increasing maternal adjustment is not sufficient, and parenting skills and parent-child interactions must be modified if child adjustment is to be enhanced by a parent-targeted program.

Wolchik and colleagues (1990, 1993) presented a "small theory" for how a parenting program can prevent postdivorce child adjustment problems. The theory was developed from a strong base in the empirical divorce literature, and guided program development and evaluation. The Children of Divorce Parenting Intervention targets five parenting practices hypothesized to be mediating factors in the relationship between divorce and child adjustment: parent-child relationships, interparental conflict, discipline, contact with and support from nonparental adults, and contact with the noncustodial parent (Wolchik et al., 1993). Their evaluation included a randomized field trial with children ages 8 to 15, and positive changes were found in participants' parenting practices, which in turn mediated program effects on mental health (Wolchik et al., 1993). Their approach is very important in that it identifies family characteristics empirically connected to child maladjustment, targets those for change, and includes a theory-driven evaluation.

¹The Colorado Separation and Divorce Program (Bloom, Hodges, & Caldwell, 1982) is not discussed here, because although its goals are education and competence enhancement, it is targeted broadly at newly separated individuals—men and women, parents or not.

Future programs for divorced parents could build on this approach by focusing specifically on the developmental transitions associated with early adolescence. Specifically, it will be important to consider the normative age-graded transition into junior high school, and accompanying age-related increases in family conflict, particularly over autonomy and control issues. Such an approach should emphasize divorced mothers' ability to provide a developmentally responsive family context, with adequate control and monitoring, but also with opportunities for adolescent participation in family decision-making processes.

In addition to lacking an adolescent developmental focus, the few programs designed for mothers seem to come from a remedial perspective, assuming deficits in the parenting skills of divorced women. They do not focus on or work to build on the strengths of divorced-mother families, provide supports to otherwise competent but stressed mothers, and they also do not include an emphasis on dispelling the stereotypes predominant in our culture about the pervasive negative effects of divorce. These gaps in programming provide the opportunity for a prevention program to make an innovative contribution to both applied and basic research involving adolescents in divorced families.

Nondivorce Related Programs for Families With Adolescents

In his working paper for the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Small (1990) described the key characteristics and target audiences of 41 programs for adolescents and their families. Programs were grouped into five categories: general parenting, sexuality, drug and alcohol prevention, achievement, and multiservice family resource centers. Almost all programs addressed parental guidance roles, such as communication, decision making, support or warmth, and discipline. None of the programs in his review specifically emphasize the unique challenges of divorced-parent families, and in fact most assume that the families they serve have two parents. In his conclusions, Small (1990) highlighted the need for programs to accommodate the diversity of family forms, and recommended the collection of sound data on program effectiveness.

DIVORCE AND ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT

The lack of preventive efforts for adolescents and divorced parents is troubling, in view of the fact that parental divorce has been implicated in several areas of adolescent maladjustment, including social, emotional, behavioral, and scholastic problems. The negative effects of divorce are most common around the period of the divorce and many children and families recover from the initial distress and resume normal functioning within a few years (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). However, a substantial number of adolescents in divorced-mother families remain at a disadvantage even 4 to 6 years after the divorce when compared to their peers in two-parent families, particularly in the areas of achievement, self-esteem, depression and risky behavior (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989;

Hetherington et al., 1992). These four domains are briefly examined in the following sections.

Intellectual Functioning and Achievement

Divorce has been linked to lower adolescent cognitive and scholastic performance, less attachment to school, and higher dropout rates (Forehand, Middleton, & Long, 1987; Hetherington et al., 1992; Zimiles & Lee, 1991). Although scholastic performance differences between divorced and two-parent family groups are usually small and may decrease over time, they consistently favor children and adolescents in always-married families (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Amato & Keith, 1991). Nevertheless, these differences often disappear when income, parental occupation, or parental conflict are statistically controlled in analyses (Barber, 1987; Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987; McCombs & Forehand, 1989; Smith, 1990), indicating that family processes related to the divorce may play a key role in the decline. The long-term implications of these declines cannot be ignored, as decrements in self-concept of academic ability, linked to reduced aspirations and expectations for educational attainment, may partly explain the fewer years of school completed by adolescents in divorced families.

Self-Processes

A great deal of research has focused on self-evaluation (competency beliefs) and personal adjustment (self-esteem). In some studies, parental divorce and father absence have been associated with lower self-esteem and feeling less competent in children and adolescents, especially in the short term (Brody, 1986; Long et al., 1987; Parish & Dostal, 1980; Smith, 1990), but these differences often decline over time (Parish & Wigle, 1985). Other studies, however, fail to find such differences for either children (Berg & Kelly, 1979; Kinard & Reinherz, 1984), adolescents (Clark & Barber, 1994), college students (Long, 1986), or adults (Amato, 1988). In their meta-analysis comparing divorced and continuously married families, Amato and Keith (1991) found a significant (but weak) negative effect of divorce on self-concept across 34 samples of children and adolescents. Thus, the differences in self-esteem between children in divorced and always-married families are not large, and within-group variability is far greater than between-group differences. Self-evaluation, with such individual variability, may provide a domain where mental health promotion efforts might capitalize on the unique opportunities afforded for responsibility and self-direction to youth in divorced families.

Internalizing

Increased depression is found in adolescents in divorced families (Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Zaslow, 1989). Similar to the findings for self-concept, effect sizes for depression and anxiety are significant but weak

(Amato & Keith, 1991). Parental conflict, frequently accompanying divorce, has been found to be related to internalizing problems such as anxiety disorders (Emery, 1988). Other explanations have included feeling caught between parents (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991), parent functioning and parenting skills (Forehand, Thomas, Wierson, Brody, & Fauber, 1990) and parent-adolescent relationships (Barber, Clark, Clossick, & Wamboldt, 1992; Forehand et al., 1990; Forehand, et al., 1991; Thomas & Forehand, 1993). Unlike aggressive behavior, which seems to be more common in boys after divorce, depression is more common for daughters (Emery, 1988). Thus, those areas in which adolescent males and females differ (independent of parental divorce) are also the areas in which they experience more pronounced effects of the divorce (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989). It is not clear if the etiology of depression in girls takes a different course than that of behavior problems in boys, and both of these areas and potential explanatory mechanisms should be considered in program development and evaluation efforts.

Risky Behavior

Children and adolescents from divorced single-mother families are more likely to engage in externalizing, aggressive, noncompliant, and deviant behavior than children in married families (Amato & Keith, 1991; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Emery, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1992; Lee, Burkam, Zimiles, & Ladewski, 1994; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Although the effect size for conduct problems is stronger than for the other domains of well-being, the difference between adolescents in divorced and married families is on the order of one quarter of a standard deviation (Amato & Keith, 1991). The most popular process-focused explanation for these higher rates is decreased parental supervision in divorced parent homes (e.g., Dornbusch et al., 1985). For White and Hispanic children, growing up in a divorced single-parent family has been linked to less parental supervision (McLanahan, Astone, & Marks, 1988). With less parental supervision, children may be more susceptible to the influence of other socializing agents, like their peers. In turn, greater compliance with peer pressure could increase the likelihood of engaging in risky behavior. In support of this perspective, adolescents living with both natural parents have been found to be less susceptible to pressure from friends to engage in deviant behavior than adolescents in divorced-parent homes (Steinberg, 1987) even when sex, age, socioeconomic status (SES), maternal employment, and family decision making are controlled.

Summary

As already reviewed, the existing body of empirical work on adolescents in divorced families suggests that a framework for intervention should include adolescent maladjustment in the areas of intellectual functioning, self-concept and self-esteem, internalizing, and conduct problems. All four of these domains

have been indicated as areas in which adolescents in divorced families are less well adjusted, and as argued in the following section, they are domains that are likely to be influenced by maternal parenting practices. The conceptual model proposed in Figure 1 targets these domains. It is likely that these indicators of adolescent adjustment influence each other (e.g., academic competence is likely to interact with self-concept). However, these relationships are beyond the scope of the issues addressed in this model.

Differences in adjustment between adolescents in divorced and married families are not effects of the divorce per se. First, some of the problems considered to be consequences of divorce are present prior to marital dissolution. For example, behavior problems in adolescents from divorced families have been found to predate their parents' divorce (Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1986; Cherlin et al., 1991). Second, living in a single divorced-mother family for a period of years exposes adolescents to a family environment with characteristics that differ from those of two-parent married families. Specifically, decision making and control, maternal expectations, and parent-child relationships are related to family structure, and in turn, are predictive of adolescent adjustment (Barber & Eccles, 1992). Thus, in addition to focusing on developmental outcomes especially relevant for adolescents, this model incorporates findings from previous divorce research in targeting specific aspects of the changing social environment (the family) during adolescence. Parenting practices are assumed to be the mechanism connecting family structure and adolescent adjustment (see Figure 1).

Adjustment is considered to be a distal outcome, responsive to characteristics of the family environment, which may be more successfully targeted in a time-limited intervention. It is anticipated that the mechanisms outlined in the following section would be crucial mediating mechanisms to include in an intervention program for divorced mothers and adolescents. The empirical evidence for connections between the family context and adolescent outcomes indicates that changes in the distal outcomes might be expected if a prevention program were successful in influencing parenting practices of divorced mothers. The conceptual model includes decision making, discipline, maternal expectations, and parent-adolescent relationships as proximal goals for program design. Maternal well-being and adolescent intrapersonal resources are also included in the conceptual framework, and are seen as potential moderators of program impact.

Throughout the discussion of the model and its implications for intervention, the custodial parent is assumed to be the mother, because women usually retain physical custody of children after divorce. In addition, most of the empirical work on postdivorce family processes cited to support the model involves families in which the mother has physical custody. Residential mothers are included as change agents in the model because they are responsible for the majority of parenting responsibilities, not because nonresidential fathers' parenting could not use improvement (see Barber, 1994).

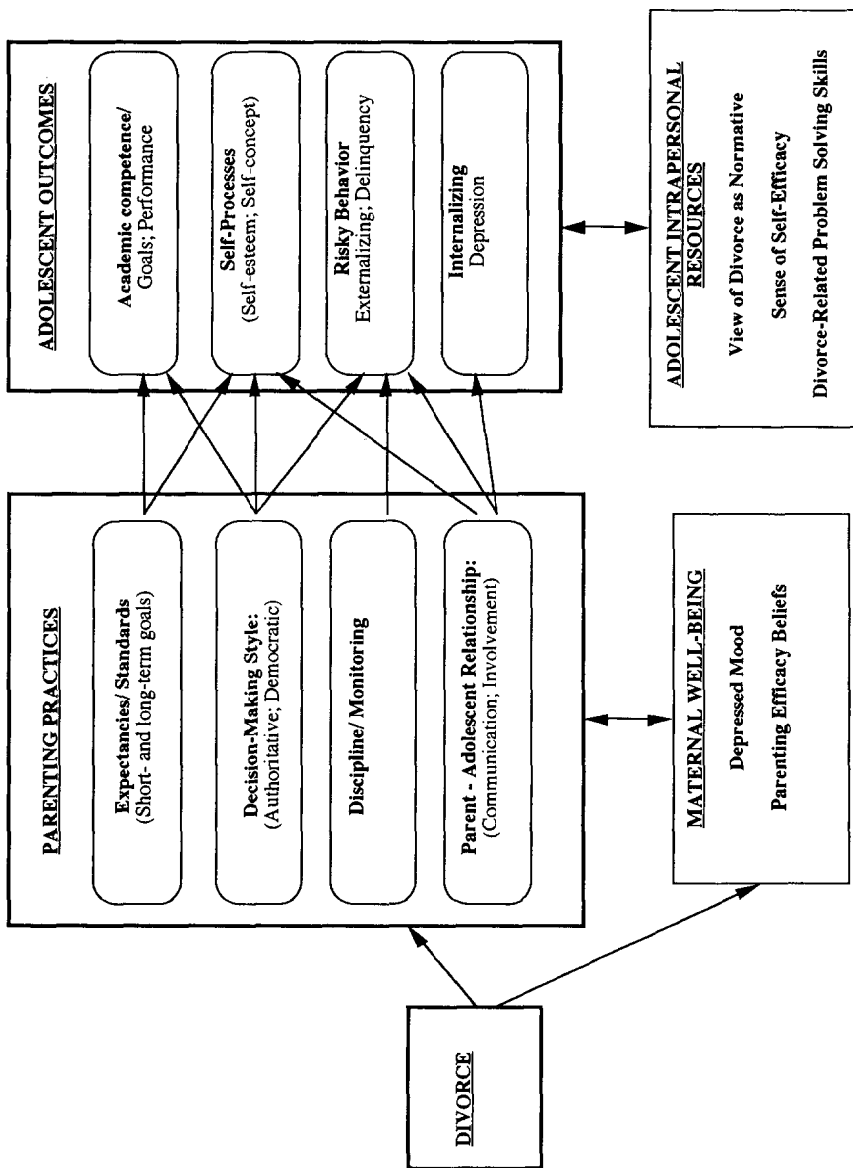


Figure 1. Empirically based model for program development and evaluation with adolescents and divorced mothers.

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FEATURES OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

There is great variability in people's response to changes in family structure (Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Hetherington et al., 1992). Whereas some exhibit disruptions in development, others adapt with competence. Focusing on adolescents who are doing well, in addition to those who are struggling, is imperative for understanding adjustment (Garmezy, 1985; Petersen & Hamburg, 1986). Further examination of family factors characteristic of both types of adolescents could reveal a great deal about the processes involved in adjustment to family transitions. Integrating protective parenting practices into a prevention program, and analyzing whether changes in those family processes predict subsequent adolescent adjustment will provide a test of models derived from correlational studies.

Decision Making, Discipline and Control

In two-parent families, both adults can collaborate on and reinforce each other's decisions about rules and discipline, or they may work against each other, undermining the discipline process. Divorced-mother families experience a shift in the authority structure. Responsibilities are redistributed, and this change may lead to greater opportunity for the adolescent to participate more in family decision making. These adolescents may have more control in negotiations over rules. In support of this idea, adolescents, especially boys, in divorced-mother families report experiencing greater opportunity for involvement in several areas of decision making and less parental control (Barber & Lyons, 1995; Baumrind, 1989; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Flanagan, 1986; Hetherington, 1989; Steinberg, 1987).

This greater responsibility and input into decision making may have either positive or negative consequences, depending on its timing, its magnitude, and its embeddedness in a detached or authoritative family climate. If it is too early for the adolescent's level of maturity, and occurs in a nonauthoritative family environment, increased independence in divorced-mother families may lead to negative outcomes because it puts too much pressure on the child, or because it can be associated with inadequate monitoring, increased susceptibility to peer pressure, and tendencies toward delinquent behavior (Dornbusch et al., 1985). If the increase in adultlike responsibility and decrease in parental control are timed correctly and embedded in a warm, authoritative family environment, they can have positive consequences associated with increased self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of contribution to the family (Barber & Lyons, 1995; Dunlop & Burns, 1988).

Processes such as parental control, discipline, and decision-making styles are related to family structure, and these processes can influence outcomes posited to be more negative in divorced families, such as poor school performance, prob-

lem behavior, and maladjustment (Barber & Lyons, 1994; Baumrind, 1991; Cohen, Brook, Cohen, Velez, & Garcia, 1990; Forgatch et al., 1988; Forgatch & Stoolmiller, 1994; Kurdek, 1987; Patterson, 1986; Steinberg, 1987), or those considered to be more positive such as independence and self-esteem (Dunlop & Burns, 1988; Weiss, 1979). These positive or negative outcomes may depend on the timing of change in processes within the family. The timing issue may be especially important during adolescence, when decision-making processes normally are being renegotiated by parents and children. Parents who are warm, democratic, and demanding, a constellation described as authoritative parenting, may be more adept at negotiating with their adolescents a more independent role, helping them to become self-reliant, behaviorally and academically competent, and mentally healthy young adults (Baumrind, 1991; Steinberg, 1990; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). The previous research on these family processes suggests that providing normative developmental information about adolescence and the changing nature of family relationships during this period, in addition to exploring decision making, monitoring techniques, and negotiation strategies, would be empirically supported components of an intervention for divorced mothers and adolescents.

Expectancies

Divorce may prove particularly damaging through its effect on maternal expectations for school achievement. Parental expectations have been shown to be important predictors of children's academic performance (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982). The beliefs that a mother holds about a child's ability and the accompanying expectations for that child's future success or failure in different domains could be important mediators of family structure effects.

Value judgments regarding the best type of family environment are omnipresent in our culture. A pervasive assumption is that the two-parent family is the ideal family structure, and that deviations from that form are disastrous for children and undermine our society (Whitehead, 1993). Negative stereotypes of divorced families persist and these stereotypes can create additional problems for these families (Barber & Eccles, 1991; Coontz, 1992). For example, if divorced mothers believe the widespread oversimplification of research findings stating that single parenting is detrimental to children, they may develop lower expectations for their own child's performance and educational attainment. Expectations about what is likely to happen to one's child may also change in the face of the stress accompanying divorce and the dramatic income fluctuations associated with marital dissolution. Divorced mothers have less time to help with schoolwork, and therefore may adjust their goals downward to reflect what they consider to be reachable limits for their children given the family's new resources and stresses. Divorced mothers have been found to have lower expectations for their children's school performance (Barber, 1987; Barber & Eccles, 1991; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988). Barber and Eccles (1991) showed

that lower maternal expectations and satisfaction with lower grades can play a mediating role between divorce and adolescents' lower achievement outcomes.

While trying to make sure that children in divorced-parent homes get what they need in terms of services and support, we must combat negative stereotypes about children of divorce, in order to avoid negative self-fulfilling prophecies. This could include providing information to parents and teachers about the negative effects of lowered expectations, along with the knowledge that lower achievement is not inevitable for children after divorce. Program components could address maternal expectations and standards as well as discipline issues with a focus on distinguishing between short-term (or current) and long-term (or future-oriented) expectations and standards. For example, a short-term standard may be related to the specific time the adolescent is to be at home in the evening or what is expected relative to homework. A long-term standard has more to do with how the mothers would like their adolescents' lives to be in the future (e.g., hopes for their children in the future relative to family and employment). Mothers could also identify constraints to meeting long-term expectations (e.g., inadequate financial resources for college), and how they and their child might work to overcome those barriers. Mothers' future-oriented expectations for their children are especially relevant for an adolescent-focused program, because adolescence is a developmental period characterized by the search for identity, and parents are frequently involved in those processes.

Parent–Child Relationships

Many researchers have looked for the negative impact of parental divorce on the relationships between children and their parents. Some studies find less positive parent–child relationships in divorced families (Warshak & Santrock, 1983). Declines after divorce seem to be particularly characteristic of father–child relationships (Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1983; Youniss & Ketterlinus, 1987). Because it is generally the father who is the noncustodial parent, and children experience a decrease in his involvement and influence in their lives subsequent to the divorce (Furstenberg, Spanier, & Rothschild, 1982), it is not surprising that relationships with fathers decline over time. The literature on effects of contact with the noncustodial parent is mixed, with some studies finding that frequent contact is related to better adjustment (Barber, 1994). However, this is not the case when there are high levels of interparental conflict. In those cases, visitation becomes another opportunity for arguments. Still other studies demonstrate a lack of any relationship between paternal involvement and adolescent adjustment (Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1987). Clark and Barber (1994) found that low levels of fathers' interest are less detrimental to adjustment in a mother-headed family than in a two-parent family, as adolescents may have lowered expectations or place less importance on involvement of nonresidential fathers.

Relationships with custodial mothers, however, show a different pattern from those with noncustodial fathers. Hetherington et al. (1982) found that shortly after a divorce, there was a disruption in parent-child relationships, but 2 years after divorce, half of the mothers in their study reported their relationships with their children were better than they had been during the marriage, when the conflict in the home was detrimental to interaction. However, there is some evidence that divorced mothers and sons show cycles of escalating coercive interactions (Hetherington, 1989).

During adolescence, there is an ongoing redefinition of parent-adolescent relationships. Across family types, adolescent development is enhanced by a warm, democratic relationship with a parent, accompanied by standards for mature behavior and consistent discipline (Barber & Lyons, 1994; Steinberg, 1990). One might predict a stronger influence of the relationship with the mother and maternal advice and support in divorced-mother families because she is the only parent in the home, and her involvement with the adolescent may have more impact than when there is also daily input from a father. In this way, mother-adolescent communication and closeness may be strongly linked to indicators of adolescent well-being, and should be an important consideration in program efforts for divorced-mother families. Program components should include communication strategies that can be employed in group problem solving and conflict resolution. In addition, participants could discuss the changing nature of the mother-adolescent relationship as the child has matured, in terms of both self-disclosure and more democratic decision making.

MATERNAL DEPRESSION AND PARENTING EFFICACY

Working to influence parenting in the domains discussed previously is not sufficient for promoting change. Effective functioning requires both skills and self-beliefs of efficacy to use them well (Bandura, *in press*). Difficulties, such as economic pressures, associated with single parenting can lead to increased maternal depression (Compas & Williams, 1990) and a diminished sense of control and agency (Elder, Eccles, Ardel, & Lord, 1995). Because depressed affect and low sense of parenting efficacy have been found to undermine effective parenting behaviors (Elder et al., 1995), the conceptual model includes both mothers' sense of parenting efficacy and depressed mood as potential mechanisms linking divorce and less promotive parenting strategies. It is not clear whether a mediational (e.g., divorce leads to a lower sense of efficacy, which in turn accounts for diminished parenting) or moderational (e.g., promotive parenting strategies are more effective for divorced mothers with a high sense of efficacy than for those with a low sense of efficacy) model of influence will be most relevant when examining program effects; thus both types of models should be examined in evaluation efforts of programs derived from such frameworks.

Although efficacy beliefs are influenced by one's knowledge and skills, they also contribute to performance independent of actual skills (Bandura, in press). Equipping mothers with skills and experiences to exercise personal control over their parenting should strengthen their sense of efficacy, but other influences on efficacy beliefs also need to be targeted. Factors other than skill level that might enhance mothers' sense of efficacy include the following: (a) normative information that many divorced (and married) parents struggle with raising adolescents, (b) development of a network of mothers facing similar challenges, and (c) knowledge of resources available that they can access when problems arise. For their potential contribution to maternal efficacy, these areas are appropriate to target in a mother-focused intervention program.

ADOLESCENT INTRAPERSONAL RESOURCES

Differences in self-efficacy between divorced and married families are not limited to mothers. Nastasi and Guidubaldi (1987) reported that children in divorced families had lower self-efficacy than those with married parents. This difference is important, in view of the fact that efficacy is predictive of adjustment in the domains of academic achievement and successful interpersonal relationships (Nastasi & Guidubaldi, 1987). Kurdek (1988) also found that generalized feelings of mastery and control were related to positive divorce adjustment, and recommended that future intervention efforts should have a cognitive focus. As indicated in the review of divorce interventions for children, other intrapersonal characteristics have been found to relate to adolescent adjustment in divorced families, including specific competencies such as divorce-related problem-solving skills, as well as emotional well-being, such as a sense of isolation and stigma (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). Thus, intervention programs involving adolescents in divorced families should target not only the family environment, but also intrapersonal strengths, such as their sense of self-efficacy, problem-solving capabilities, and understanding of divorce.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION RESEARCH

The research summarized in this article has provided evidence regarding important influences on adolescent development in divorced families, and on the gaps in the intervention efforts for divorced families. For example, at the family level, several factors have been identified as important predictors of maladjustment. Key among these factors seem to be indicators of developmentally appropriate family environments. However, the extent to which prevention-focused research on divorce uses a developmental theoretical approach is quite limited. Thus, very little is known about how changes in family processes and the subsequent adjustment of the adolescent may be influenced by prevention or promotion efforts.

The proposed conceptual model focuses on multiple family-level mechanisms and processes as critical and malleable pathways to adolescent well-being or maladjustment. The model is based on the assumption that the risk for adolescents in divorced families lies in the social context, not the adolescents themselves. Such an ecological perspective implies the need to provide resources in the environment to facilitate development and to modify conditions in the environment that are developmentally hazardous (Felner & Felner, 1989). Programs developed from ecological models of adolescent development will extend current efforts that target specific individual-level characteristics, skills, or strengths (e.g., Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985), and complement existing efforts for children and parents (e.g., Wolchik et al., 1993). The conceptual model in Figure 1 suggests developing parallel programs for mothers and adolescents and targeting the mother's parenting practices and her well-being, as well as adolescents' intrapersonal resources. In addition to targeting the family as a crucial context, future divorce intervention efforts should consider other adolescent social contexts, including peer groups, schools, and communities, because of their increasing importance during the adolescent years.

Evaluation of programs developed from an intervention model such as the one proposed here need to examine the effectiveness of different components of the program (Cook, Anson, & Walchli, 1993; Wolchik et al., 1993). The following three research questions should guide evaluation of programs developed from this conceptual model: (a) Does the intervention program have an impact on family functioning in the four domains it targets as proximal outcomes (decision making, discipline, expectations, and the parent-adolescent relationship)? Are some of these domains affected more strongly than others? (b) Are there changes in adjustment in the adolescent participants over the course of follow-up evaluations in the four domains examined (academic competence, self-processes, externalizing, and internalizing)? (c) Do changes in specific features of the family environment (e.g., monitoring or communication) predict changes in distinct components of adjustment (e.g., risky behavior or emotional well-being)? Research addressing these criteria will complement evaluation efforts that describe program effectiveness without testing substantive theories for explaining program effects.

In conclusion, we know that some adolescents do not fare well following parental divorce. Although family transitions appear to be difficult for many adolescents, some live in less supportive family contexts than others. Evaluation of prevention programs based on the framework presented here will provide insights into whether empirically derived prevention efforts targeting protective and risky family processes can facilitate healthy interaction, and if so, whether those changes in family processes result in a reduction in adverse adolescent outcomes over time.

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