Interdisciplinary Law School and Psychology Graduate Training: 
Incorporating the Children’s Perspective into Divorce Mediation and Conducting Program Evaluation Research

This proposal seeks funding for an interdisciplinary law and psychology graduate level teaching project. The broad goals of the project are: 1) to foster interdisciplinary training of law and psychology graduate students in the area of divorce mediation, improving the training for both groups of students; 2) to train the students in new interdisciplinary methods of divorce mediation that incorporate the children’s perspective; 3) to train students in program evaluation research methods by conducting a program evaluation of the new divorce mediation methods; 4) to conduct research to examine the impact of our new interdisciplinary training; and 5) to disseminate what we learn about training and education to others across the country.

Nationally, there is increasing interest in the overlap between psychology and law. These two disciplines often intersect in the real world; for example, psychologists may serve as expert witnesses in court or be asked to assess the competence of an individual to stand trial. New areas of psychological research have direct implications for legal proceedings, including studies on eyewitness testimony and biases in jury selection. Family law is an area of extensive overlap between law and psychology. For example, psychologists are often asked to conduct child custody evaluations and divorce mediators may be lawyers or psychologists. Indeed, the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) has issued calls for interdisciplinary training in family law (entire Oct. 2006 issue of Family Court Review). At Indiana University (IU), law and psychology faculty interested in the impact of divorce on children have begun to collaborate in conducting interdisciplinary training of law students and psychology graduate students. This collaboration presents a unique opportunity to develop interdisciplinary graduate level education that builds on the strengths of both the psychology and law programs at IU.

The IU Department of Psychological and Brain Science’s (PBS) clinical science graduate program is one of the top ten clinical psychology doctoral programs in the nation. The prominence of this program derives from its focus on empirical research as the basis for understanding and treating psychological problems, an emphasis consistent with emerging trends in the field of clinical psychology. The role of doctorate level psychologists no longer involves as much direct therapy work, but rather is evolving to include the development and evaluation of interventions. For example, a psychologist may be hired to develop an intervention program, train and supervise therapists in the intervention, and conduct a program evaluation study of the intervention’s efficacy. Preparation for this role, which capitalizes on psychologists’ expertise in research methodology, is one goal of the clinical science psychology program at IU. Traditionally, however, IU psychology graduate students have not received training in legal issues, even those issues directly impacting groups they study and treat. Thus, psychology graduate training will be enhanced by education in relevant legal issues and real-life exposure to legal clients and procedures.

Our clinical science faculty members are nationally recognized researchers, frequently receiving externally funded grants to conduct research in their areas of interest and publishing in top-tier journals. Three PBS faculty members are involved in this project. Amy Holtzworth-Munroe is a national expert on marriage, marital violence, and marital therapy. She has conducted studies of therapy effectiveness for both marital therapy and batterer treatment programs. She has recently begun to conduct research on divorce mediation. Brian D’Onofrio is an expert on child development, child psychopathology, child therapy, and the impact of divorce on children. His primary research area is behavioral genetics (e.g., the relative impact of genes, the environment, and gene-environment interactions on children’s psychological problems); he also has been involved in testing the effectiveness of interventions with divorcing couples. Jack Bates is an expert in child development and psychopathology. One of his projects involves a longitudinal study of the development of psychopathology among children and adolescents, including the impact of such problems as marital conflict and divorce. Bates also has extensive experience with family and child therapy.

IU’s Law School is a tier-one law school, ranked 36th in the country and 15th among public schools. A unique training opportunity at the IU Law School is the Family and Children Mediation Clinic, which trains law students to integrate theoretical and classroom learning with the real-life experience of conducting divorce mediation. Amy Applegate teaches and directs the clinical program, training law students to become state-approved family law mediators and provide mediation services to the community. Her divorce mediation program is offered every semester. Law students generally do not receive training in program evaluation or reading the social science literature to identify interventions empirically demonstrated to be effective. Yet, legal experts and judges frequently request such information, asking which interventions might be useful for their clients. Thus, law student mediators will benefit from better understanding psychological research on divorce and its effects, and from learning program evaluation methodology. Similarly, mediation clients will benefit from the students’
social science training. Such training is important both to the quality of the services rendered and the evaluation of which interventions are actually appropriate and helpful for which parties.

**Aim 1: Fostering Interdisciplinary Training in Family Law for Law Students and Psychology Students:** Already, these four faculty members (Holtzworth-Munroe, D’Onofrio, and Bates in PBS; Applegate in the Law School) have informally been developing ways to provide interdisciplinary training to law students and psychology graduate students.

First, we have begun to develop interdisciplinary courses. In Fall 2007, D’Onofrio offered a graduate level seminar (P657) on the psychological and legal aspects of divorce and the effects of divorce on children, including psychology graduate students and law students. The students uniformly reported that this interdisciplinary class was an exciting and important part of their training. We plan to offer this course approximately every other year, as a means of regularly providing interdisciplinary training to law and psychology students. Similarly, Applegate has begun to allow clinical science graduate students to take her divorce mediation clinic course. In fall 2007, one psychology student observed parts of Applegate’s course; other psychology students have expressed interest in the doing so.

Second, in Fall 2007, at IU, we hosted an international conference on interventions for divorcing couples. That conference was jointly sponsored by the IU Law School and Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, demonstrating the support for our collaborative efforts in both units. This conference included both law and psychology students. We now are co-editing a special journal issue for *Family Court Review* based on that conference and focusing on social science research implications for family law issues in divorce cases. Two articles in the special issue explicitly focus on the interdisciplinary training of law and psychology students. One article is being co-written by Applegate and D’Onofrio about their experiences to date regarding the education of graduate students and law students. The other is a student note, co-written by a law student (Mary Nyman) and a psychology graduate student (Robin Ballard) about their experiences with the interdisciplinary training they received. A draft of the student note is attached; it demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary training to these students.

Third, our faculty team has begun to conduct research together. Involving psychology and law students, we have begun a study regarding how best to screen for the presence of domestic violence among couples seeking divorce mediation. Holtzworth-Munroe and Applegate are the principal faculty investigators on this project.

Our joint efforts to date demonstrate faculty and student enthusiasm for interdisciplinary training in divorce mediation. We plan to continue teaching these courses and conducting research together, with joint law and psychology graduate student involvement. However, the current proposal would allow us to take our interdisciplinary training to a new level and systematically examine its impact (see Aim 4).

**Aims 2 and 3: Training Students in New Interdisciplinary Divorce Mediation Approaches that Bring the Children’s Perspective into Mediation, and Training Students to use Program Evaluation Research Methods to Test the Efficacy of these New Interventions:** The current proposal is designed to take our interdisciplinary training efforts to a new level, training students to use new interdisciplinary methods of divorce mediation and to conduct a program evaluation of these new methods. To explain our interest in these new interventions, we present a brief research review.

Divorce ends 40-50% of first marriages in the U.S., affecting 1 million children per year. In addition, an increasing number of children (1/3) are born to unmarried parents, and such relationships are even less stable than marriage. Thus, many children experience the break-up of their parents’ relationship, which we refer to as “divorce.” Divorce inflicts multiple disruptions (e.g., financial, residential, emotional) upon parents and children. As a result, divorce is a risk factor for the development of psychological problems among children. Relative to children from intact families, children from divorced homes have double the risk of psychological and behavioral problems (e.g., depression, delinquent behavior) and an increased risk of academic and social problems, including relationship problems in adulthood. Certain factors lessen the potential negative effects of divorce on children. Specifically, children do better when there is less parental conflict, when the child can maintain a positive relationship with the nonresidential parent, and when both parents can continue to provide appropriate parenting.

However, experts have argued that traditional, adversarial litigation approaches work against such outcomes, instead exacerbating the potential negative effects of divorce by increasing parental conflict. In response to such concerns, many have argued that divorce mediation can decrease inter-parental conflict, ideally leading to better outcomes for children.
Indeed, divorce mediation has become relatively widespread. Unfortunately, few methodologically strong studies have examined its effects, and the studies’ shortcomings limit the conclusions that can be drawn from available data. Nevertheless, preliminary data suggest that divorce mediation has beneficial outcomes compared to the normal litigation process, including: increased likelihood of parents reaching an agreement, decreased litigation following divorce, more father satisfaction with the agreement, and more father involvement with their children (Emery et al., 2005). Mediation, however, is not a panacea. In fact, recent research reviewers have noted that mediation has not been consistently demonstrated to produce positive effects and that although mediation may be helpful to some couples, others do not benefit or may even be hurt (Beck et al., 2004). Thus, given the widespread use of mediation, it is crucial that the field develop new methods to improve its impact.

One suggested improvement is to increase parents’ focus on their children’s best interests—to help parents to understand the potential negative effects of divorce on children and to thus motivate parents to minimize those impacts by decreasing their conflict and reaching parenting agreements that are good for their children. Based on this notion, in Australia, McIntosh (2007) developed an innovative program—Child Inclusive Divorce Mediation (CI). As in standard divorce mediation, both parents meet with a mediator, whose role is to formally negotiate parental disputes while maintaining neutrality. In addition, in the CI program, a second professional, called the child consultant (a specially trained mental health professional), meets with the children of the couple. This consultant assesses the children to gain an understanding of the needs and concerns of each child and how the parents’ separation is affecting him/her; it is important to note that the child is not put into a decision-making role (e.g., the child is not asked to choose which parent they wish to live with). Using this information, the child consultant then meets with the mediator and parents, representing the child’s perspective in the mediation process. The child consultant gives individualized feedback to the parents about their child’s concerns and reactions to the separation, providing guidance regarding issues the parents should consider in mediation. Through such feedback, the consultant also supports the parents’ ability to reflect sensitively on the needs of their children. CI includes both mediators and child consultants. As such, it is a uniquely interdisciplinary approach to mediation, allowing lawyers and psychologists to work together for the best interests of children.

CI is an intensive intervention that requires meeting with the child to provide parents with individualized feedback about their child. Possibly, such personalized feedback is not necessary. Instead, perhaps informing parents about the impact of divorce on children in general would be enough to motivate them to consider the best interests of their children during mediation. Given such issues, McIntosh (2007) also developed Child Focused Divorce Mediation (CF), which aims to help parents reach an agreement that reflects the children’s needs, but does not directly involve the child (i.e., the consultant does not meet with the child). Instead, parents are educated about common concerns of children in divorcing families and the impact of parental conflict on children, and are encouraged to consider their child’s developmental stage when making parenting agreements. Again, both mediators and child consultants are involved in this interdisciplinary approach.

In Australia, McIntosh and Long (2006) conducted a study comparing the effectiveness of CI and CF. Almost 150 families participated. Both interventions lowered inter-parental conflict and child distress about parental discord and both improved child mental health. In addition, relative to CF, the CI group had better outcomes on several measures (e.g., father satisfaction with parenting arrangements, father involvement in their children’s lives, less litigation following divorce). Unfortunately, the McIntosh study did not involve random assignment of families to the two conditions (CI vs. CF); yet random assignment is the only way to be sure that the interventions were responsible for differences in outcome across the two conditions. Without random assignment, other factors could account for the study findings (e.g., historical events, changes in the mediator’s behavior over time). Also, this study did not compare CI or CF to usual divorce mediation, making it impossible to know whether CI or CF improved outcome relative to usual mediation procedures. Thus, there is need is for a more methodologically sound research study (i.e., random assignment) comparing CI, CF, and regular divorce mediation. There is also a need to conduct such a study in the U.S., due to cultural and legal system differences with Australia. There is a further need to learn how the training of mediators and psychologists in both CI and CF mediation improves their education.

In our new interdisciplinary training project, students will learn to conduct three different interventions and to compare the efficacy of these interventions: divorce mediation as usual, CF, and CI. We are very fortunate that McIntosh (Professor of Psychology, La Trobe University in Melbourne) has agreed to serve as a consultant for this project. McIntosh attended the Fall 2007 IU divorce conference, and we are in regular contact with her. It is important to note that the proposed project involves changing and expanding the interdisciplinary training of both law and psychology students. Law students will continue to primarily serve as the divorce mediators; however, this proposal will expand their training, teaching them how to conduct their mediation sessions in collaboration with a child consultant specialist (in both CI and CF conditions).
Psychology graduate students will be trained to work as child consultant specialists, in collaboration with law student mediators. In addition, by conducting a study comparing the three interventions, we will train law and psychology students to conduct program evaluation research. To aid this training, we will hold weekly, interdisciplinary meetings with students to discuss program evaluation research and to plan and conduct our study.

**Aim 4, To Conduct Research to Examine the Impact of Our New Interdisciplinary Training:** Of particular relevance to the goals of the SOTL award, an overarching goal of our project is to conduct research examining the impact of our interdisciplinary training on students. We will do so in multiple ways.

First, using a quasi-experimental study design, we will compare the knowledge of relevant issues acquired by law and psychology students as they are currently trained versus as they will be trained in the new CI/CF divorce mediation training program. In the first semester of the proposed project (i.e., Fall 2008), we will continue training as usual (i.e., do not begin our new CI/CF training). That semester, we will gather data from approximately 5 – 7 psychology students interested in this topic and approximately 8 law students taking Applegate’s divorce mediation course (note that Applegate’s course is offered each semester). This group of students will serve as our current-training comparison or control group. At the start of the semester, all of these students will be given a written test of their knowledge regarding divorce, social science research findings on divorce (e.g., psychological consequences for children), interventions for divorce, relevant laws and legal statutes and ethics, and program evaluation. These students will then complete the semester as usual (i.e., no specialized training beyond what we are already doing). They will then be tested again, at the end of the semester, for their knowledge. A comparison of the two data collection points will provide baseline information on the knowledge students acquire through the current training program. Then, in each of the following semesters of this project (i.e., Spring 2009, Fall 2009, and Spring 2010), we will implement our new CI/CF training program and study. Law and psychology students trained in these three semesters will serve as our experimental group (approximately 30 students in total). Each semester, these students will complete the knowledge pre-test (at the beginning of the semester) and the knowledge post-test (at the end of the semester). Comparison of the current-training comparison group and the experimental (CF/CI training) group on changes in knowledge (across the semester and final (end of semester) level of knowledge, will allow us to examine the impact of our new training program.

Second, we will conduct focus groups with interested law and psychology students, at the beginning and end of each semester of the project. At the beginning of each semester, we will ask students about their knowledge, their interests, and their training goals. At the end of each semester, we will ask about their knowledge and their experiences with training. Again, in a quasi-experimental study design, we will compare student responses from the first semester (of current, not CF/CI training) to the responses of students from the next three semesters (with CF/CI training). We will use student responses to evaluate the impact of our new training.

Third, we will gather evidence that we are able to train students to conduct the new mediation methods (CF and CI). To do so, we will employ research methods widely utilized in the psychology therapy outcome research field to measure two issues relevant to therapist training--therapist adherence to a treatment protocol and therapist competence. The first issue (adherence) is important to ensure that the tested treatments were conducted as intended (i.e., that we were able to train the therapists to conduct the interventions). The second issue involves determining if therapists conducted the interventions competently. Adopting methods from psychological treatment outcome research, we will work with McIntosh to design measures of student adherence to each of the three tested methods of mediation (i.e., divorce mediation as usual versus CF versus CI) and student competence in each approach. For example, a competent child consultant in CI mediation establishes rapport with the child (e.g., explains the process and helps the child to feel comfortable before beginning a formal assessment), and explores the child’s needs and concerns in light of the parents’ separation, and the effect of that separation on the child, but does not ask the child to take direct responsibility for decisions about his/her future (e.g., does not ask, “which parent do you want to live with?”). As another example, a competent CF consultant finds out the ages of the couple’s children and provides information to the parents about the specific developmental issues for children of those ages. And, the divorce mediator in CF and CI would be expected to spend more time than in a usual mediation discussing how the terms of the mediation agreement directly address the specific concerns of the couple’s children. Measures to assess such therapist skills will involve a series of rating scales. We will audiotape mediation sessions and have trained observers code those tapes, rating the mediator and child consultant for each intervention skill listed. Using such measures, we will be able to gauge the effectiveness of our training for law and psychology students. Holtzworth-Munroe has experience developing and using such measures to assess the adherence and competence of marital therapists in studies of marital therapy.
Fourth, we will gather evidence that we have trained students in program evaluation research. As already noted, our pre- and post-semester knowledge tests will include questions about program evaluation research methods. In addition, the students’ learning of research methodology will culminate in two final projects. First, working with the faculty involved, the students will co-author a research paper on the project, to be submitted to a national conference and to a peer-edited journal for possible publication. Second, working with faculty, the students will be asked to co-author a grant proposal to an external funding agency to conduct a larger study of various forms of child-involved mediation. For example, Holtzworth-Munroe has been in contact with the Director of the William T. Grant Foundation, Ed Seidman (who attended the IU conference on divorce in Fall 2007). Seidman has expressed interest in research on new interventions and indicated that our gathering of pilot data would create a much stronger grant proposal to the Foundation.

**Aim 5, Disseminating our Interdisciplinary Training Experiences to Others:** Our project would put IU law and psychology students at the cutting edge of innovations in divorce mediation training and allow us to promote increased excellence in interdisciplinary training at the national level. Our collaboration has already begun to improve professional education. Our newly developed interdisciplinary training efforts for divorce mediators were nationally recognized at the IU Fall 2007 divorce conference, and as noted above, the team is preparing two scholarly publications as a result.

An important goal for the proposed research project is to produce research that will be widely disseminated for use in professional training. Thus, we have developed our proposal in collaboration with Peter Salem, the Executive Director of the AFCC, which actively promotes the dissemination of interdisciplinary education and training through its journal, *Family Court Review*, and its yearly regional and national conferences. Indeed, the entire October 2006 issue of *Family Court Review* was a special issue devoted to the need for interdisciplinary training in family law, presenting recommendations from the Family Law Education Reform Project. Thus, with the help of Salem and the AFCC, we plan to disseminate widely our findings and resulting training recommendations, in both publications and conference presentations.

**Timeline:** Our project timeline is 24 months, beginning in Fall 2008 and ending in Summer 2010. In Fall 2008, we will conduct our law and psychology training programs as usual. We will conduct our initial pre- and post-semester focus groups and knowledge tests, allowing us to gather baseline data on the impact of our current, non-CF/CI training. We also will use the Fall 2008 semester to develop study measures, including measures of mediator and child consultant adherence and competence for each intervention. Finally, in Fall 2008, we will bring McIntosh to IU to offer her CF and CI intervention training workshops to our program faculty, so that our faculty will be certified CI and CF child consultants, ready to train and supervise students in these new approaches in the following semesters.

In Spring 2009, Fall 2009, and Spring 2010, we will implement our new CF/CI training and conduct the proposed program evaluation study comparing the three different interventions. We will continue training students in divorce mediation as usual at Applegate’s clinic. In addition, our faculty team, having been trained by McIntosh, will train the students in CI and CF divorce mediation. We also will begin our weekly, interdisciplinary meetings on program evaluation research methodology. Each of these three semesters, we will conduct pre- and post-semester focus groups and knowledge tests to examine what students are learning each semester and how they feel about the training experience.

For our program evaluation study, over the course of more than one year (i.e., Spring 2009, Fall 2009, and into Spring 2010), couples seeking divorce mediation at the IU Clinic will be asked to participate in the study. If they agree, they will be randomly assigned to one of the three interventions (mediation as usual versus CF versus CI). Each year, the IU Law School Clinic sees approximately 100 couples in mediation. Thus, 33 couples will be randomly assigned to each intervention condition, enough to provide statistical power for pilot testing of differences in the interventions’ effectiveness. Outcomes at the end of mediation will be compared. We will compare the interventions on a variety of outcome measures, including rates of reaching agreement in mediation and parental satisfaction with agreements. Most importantly, given our focus on improving the outcome of mediation for children, we will code the content of agreements reached to examine how parenting issues were resolved (e.g., time with nonresidential parent, flexibility in parenting arrangements, child support, joint custody). In Spring 2010, we will help students write up the study findings and submit papers to conferences and peer-reviewed journals. We will also help students write an external grant proposal. Working with Salem at the AFCC, we will develop a paper to be submitted to a national conference and a peer-edited journal about our training program and our suggestions for future interdisciplinary education in family law.
References


FACT SHEET: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Leadership Award Competition

Title: Interdisciplinary Law School and Psychology Graduate Training

Applicants: Holtzworth-Munroe, Applegate, D’Onofrio, and Bates

Goals of the Project: 1) to foster interdisciplinary training of law and psychology graduate students in the area of divorce mediation, improving the training for both groups of students; 2) to train the students in new interdisciplinary methods of divorce mediation that incorporate the children’s perspective; 3) to train students in program evaluation research methods by conducting a program evaluation of the new divorce mediation methods; 4) to conduct research to examine the impact of our new interdisciplinary training; and 5) to disseminate what we learn about training and education to others across the country.

Research Plan and Time Schedule:

Fall 2008:
- Conduct training programs as usual for law students and psychology graduate students.
- Beginning and End of semester: Conduct focus groups and knowledge tests with students, to gather information on the effects of our existing training programs.
- Develop all study measures (e.g., measures of adherence and competence).
- Faculty obtain training in Child Inclusive and Child Focused divorce mediation.

Spring 2009, Fall 2009, and Spring 2010, Each Semester:
- Conduct new interdisciplinary training program with law students and psychology graduate students in: 1) new, interdisciplinary methods of divorce mediation—Child Inclusive (CI) and Child Focused (CF); and 2) program evaluation.
- Beginning and End of semester: Conduct focus group and knowledge tests with students, to gather information on effects of our new training program.
- Observers code mediation sessions for mediator and child consultant adherence and competence, as another test of the effectiveness of our new, interdisciplinary training.
- Conduct our program evaluation study comparing divorce mediation as usual versus CI versus CF.

Spring 2010:
- Finish both the program evaluation study and the study of the impact of our new, interdisciplinary training.
- Students write manuscript and conference presentations based on program evaluation study findings.
- Students write an external grant proposal.
- Work with the Association for Family and Conciliation Courts to disseminate findings regarding interdisciplinary training through conference presentations and journal articles.

Impact of Study on Teaching and Learning: This study will develop a new interdisciplinary training program for law students and psychology graduate students in the area of family law. Students will work together to learn, implement, and evaluate two new, interdisciplinary methods of divorce mediation—CI and CF. Students will learn program evaluation methods by conducting a study of the efficacy of CI versus CF versus divorce mediation as usual. We will study the impact of our new interdisciplinary training and disseminate our findings nationally.

Names and Roles of the Principal Faculty Members Involved:
IU Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences:
    Amy Holtzworth-Munroe, Brian D’Onofrio, Jack Bates
IU School of Law: Amy Applegate

All four IU faculty members will be involved in all aspects of the proposed project. At the School of Law Family and Children Mediation Clinic, Applegate will train and supervise students in divorce. Holtzworth-Munroe, D’Onofrio, and Bates will train and supervise students to serve as child consultants in CI and CF. All faculty will be involved in the program evaluation study. All also will be involved in the study evaluating the impact of our new methods of interdisciplinary training in divorce mediation.
Budget Justification for

Interdisciplinary Law School and Psychology Graduate Training:
Incorporating the Children’s Perspective into Divorce Mediation
and Conducting Program Evaluation Research

Travel (McIntosh visit to IU for training workshop): $5,000

General Supplies and Expenses:

Supplies: $1,500

Printing and Duplicating: $500

Long Distance Phone Calls: $500

Study Participant Compensation: $20,000

Other Costs:

Training and Consultant Fees: $7,500

Project Total Budget: $35,000

Budget Justification

Travel:

In the first semester of the project (Fall 2008), we will pay for Jenn McIntosh to travel to IU from Australia to finish her Child Inclusive and Child Focused Divorce Mediation training workshops for our project faculty. Based on the costs of McIntosh’s last visit, and a recent check of airfares on internet ticket agents, we are estimating that the cost of this travel will be $5,000.

General Supplies and Expenses:

Research Supplies, Printing and Duplicating, and Long Distance Phone Calls:

Research Supplies: We must purchase the child assessment measures to be used in CI condition (e.g., cards presenting various emotion “bears,” playroom equipment such as a dollhouse). Other lab supplies must be purchased, including paper for measures and copying, folders for filing completed data, computer programs for analyzing data, etc. Based on the pricing of these items and past experience running comparable studies, we estimate that such supplies will cost $1,500.

Printing and Duplicating: Measures must be printed and copied. Law School clinic records must be copied for research files. Based on past experience, we estimate that this will cost $500.

Long Distance Phone Calls: While implementing the CI and CF interventions, we will need weekly consultation via phone calls with McIntosh, who lives in Australia. We will occasionally have other consultation conference phone calls with McIntosh regarding this research project. To cover these costs, we are allowing $500.
Study Participant Compensation:

It is essential to compensate study participants for their time in the study. Many of the couples who attend the IU Law School Mediation Clinic are economically disadvantaged. They may have difficulty paying for transportation or childcare to attend the mediation and research sessions. Study participation will require more of their time than would mediation alone, in addition to other extra efforts. For example, one of the four interventions (CI) requires the parents to bring their child(ren) for an evaluation session. Our two new conditions (CI and CF) both involve having a child consultant in the mediation session, which may result in the mediation taking longer than usual, as more information is being shared with the parents. All of the conditions require parents to fill out research measures pre- and post-mediation and to allow their mediation sessions to be audiotaped for later coding. In addition, to participate in the study, parents must agree to random assignment to one of three conditions; this may be viewed as an inconvenience by some parents.

Thus, we wish to compensate parents for their willingness to participate in the study. We have set our compensation rates based on our experience with similar populations of study participants and our resulting knowledge of the level of compensation necessary to make study participation worthwhile for these couples (e.g., the PI’s research with violent couples and poorer couples seeking marital therapy; a current pilot study at the Law School Mediation Clinic). We have also set the level of compensation high enough that participants could use this money to help cover the expenses of childcare and/or transportation in order to participate in the study.

All couples coming to the Law School Clinic will be asked to participate and will be compensated for the time they devote to the study. The study will involve 100 couples, or 200 individuals. Given the anticipated length of study participation (e.g., possible extra session with the child or completing measures, possible longer mediation), we plan to compensate each parent $100 for their participation in the study. Thus, $100/person X 200 study participants = $20,000.

Other Costs:

Training and Consultant Fee:

McIntosh will spend 2 – 3 days finishing her CI and CF training, so that we will be certified child consultants, able to provide both of these interventions. Her charge for this training is $5,500. In addition, we will need to continue consulting with McIntosh, both for ongoing supervision of our CI and CF interventions and for consultation on the study. For this consultation, we will pay McIntosh $2,000. Thus, the total pay to McIntosh will be $7,500.

Total project costs: $35,000
Request for Additional Funding

Interdisciplinary Law School and Psychology Graduate Training: Incorporating the Children’s Perspective into Divorce Mediation and Conducting Program Evaluation Research

This is a request to obtain an additional $8300 for our interdisciplinary SOTL project. The revised budget takes into consideration cost factors beyond our control and reflects changes we have made to the original SOTL proposal after not receiving the full $35000 award. In the revised budget, we make every effort to accommodate funding constraints, maintain the integrity of the original proposal, and successfully achieve the overall objectives of the project. Changes include:

- Reducing student training from three semesters to two semesters
- Decreasing the number of couples participating in the program evaluation study from 100 couples (200 individuals) to 66 couples (132 individuals)
- Reducing the cost of study participant compensation substantially, from $20,000 to $13,200

Revised Budget Request

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(Original budget request = $35,000; Proposed SOTL funding = $20,000; Now requesting restoration of $8,300, to $28,300)
Travel:

In spring 2009, we will pay for Jenn McIntosh to travel to IU from Australia to conduct her Child Inclusive and Child Focused Divorce Mediation training workshops for our project faculty. We have increased this cost due to the increased cost of airfares, which in turn, is due to increased fuel costs and the decreasing strength of the US dollar (relative to the Australian dollar). Based on a new check of airfares, we are estimating that the cost of McIntosh’s travel will be $6,000.

General Supplies and Expenses:

Research Supplies, Printing and Duplicating, and Long Distance Phone Calls:

Research Supplies: We must purchase the child assessment measures to be used in CI condition (e.g., cards presenting various emotion “bears,” playroom equipment such as a dollhouse). Other lab supplies must be purchased, including paper for measures and copying, folders for filing completed data, computer programs for analyzing data, etc. Another item is tapes for recording child consultant meetings with children and mediation sessions. These tapes would be useful for coding adherence to the three different interventions (divorce mediation as usual, CF and CI). They would be helpful in documenting changes in the student’s implementation of divorce mediation resulting from our new, interdisciplinary training. We are willing to reuse tapes and will try to find bargains for other materials. Thus, despite adding a new item (i.e., tapes), we are reducing our estimated supply costs to $1,000.

Printing and Duplicating: Measures must be printed and copied. Law School clinic records must be copied for research files. We are reducing this estimated cost to $300.

Long Distance Phone Calls: While implementing the CI and CF interventions, we will need weekly consultation via phone calls with McIntosh, who lives in Australia. We will occasionally have other consultation conference phone calls with McIntosh regarding this research project. To cover these costs, we are reducing our estimated cost to $300.

Study Participant Compensation:

All couples coming to the Law School Clinic will be asked to participate and will be compensated for the time they devote to the study. Given the anticipated length of study participation (e.g., possible extra session with the child or completing measures, possible longer mediation), we plan to compensate each parent $100 for their participation in the study.

It is essential to compensate study participants for their time in the study. Many of the couples who attend the IU Law School Mediation Clinic are economically disadvantaged. They may have difficulty paying for transportation or childcare to attend the mediation and research sessions. Study participation will require more of their time than would mediation alone, in addition to other extra efforts. For example, one of the four interventions (CI) requires the parents to bring their child(ren) for an evaluation session. Our two new conditions (CI and CF) both involve having a child consultant in the mediation session, which may result in the mediation taking longer than usual, as more information is being shared with the parents. All of the conditions require parents to fill out research measures pre- and post-mediation, and will likely require parents to allow their mediation sessions to be taped for later coding. In addition, to participate in the study, parents must agree to random assignment to one of three conditions; this may be viewed as an inconvenience by some parents.
Thus, we wish to compensate parents for their willingness to participate in the study. We have set our compensation rates based on our experience with similar populations of study participants and our resulting knowledge of the level of compensation necessary to make study participation worthwhile for these couples (e.g., the PI’s research with violent couples and poorer couples seeking marital therapy; a current pilot study at the Law School Mediation Clinic). We have also set the level of compensation high enough that participants could use this money to help cover the expenses of childcare and/or transportation in order to participate in the study.

Given the revised timeline of the study, we will recruit couples over two, not three, semesters. Thus, instead of involving 100 couples, we now plan to recruit 66 couples, or 132 individuals. Thus, our revised cost estimate is $100/person X 132 study participants = $13,200.

**Other Costs:**

**Training and Consultant Fee:**

McIntosh will spend 2 – 3 days finishing her CI and CF training, so that we will be certified child consultants, able to provide both of these interventions. Her charge for this training is $5,500. This is less than she usually charges, as she was willing to reduce her fees, given that she is a consultant on the study. In addition, we will need to continue consulting with McIntosh, both for ongoing supervision of our CI and CF interventions and for consultation on the study. For this consultation, we will pay McIntosh $2,000; again, this fee is reduced from her usual charges. Thus, the total pay to McIntosh will be $7,500.
Perspectives on Interdisciplinary Training from Law and Psychology:
A Student Note Regarding Experience with Interdisciplinary Training:

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Perspectives on Interdisciplinary Training from Law and Psychology:

A Student Note Regarding Experience with Interdisciplinary Training:

The opportunity to do interdisciplinary research and training is both exciting and daunting. As Indiana University forges a partnership between law and psychology, graduate and law students are on the frontlines of the collaboration – present for both the rewards and the challenges of bringing two disciplines together. We are grateful for this chance to represent the voice of students involved in interdisciplinary training and education. As a third year law student at Indiana School of Law (M.N.) and a first year graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Indiana University (R.B.), we respond to the following questions about our interdisciplinary experiences in law and psychology.

(Footnote re definitions of terms to be used: The “Mediation Clinic” refers to the Indiana University Law School’s Family and Children Mediation Clinic. This clinic provides divorce mediation to low income clients. It is directed and supervised by Amy Applegate, Clinical Professor of Law. “PBS” refers to Indiana University’s Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. The “IU Conference” refers to “For the Sake of the Children: Advances in Family Dispute Resolution,” an interdisciplinary conference, supported by both the Indiana University Law School and Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, and held at Indiana University on November 15-16, 2007. The “seminar” refers to a graduate level seminar, entitled “Consequences of Divorce and Effective Interventions”, taught by Brian D’Onofrio, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences; the seminar was offered to law students and psychology graduate students.)
1. What were you hoping to get out of your graduate education? What were your expectations?

M.N.: I grew up watching television shows and movies that depicted lawyers in a professional and exciting light. In addition, I wanted to enter a service profession where I could use my education to help people in my community. Upon entering law school, I was hoping to learn how to work with clients and respond to their individual legal needs.

My law school summer work for a non-profit guardian ad litem office and a law firm with a family law practice area helped me decide to pursue a career in family law. I wanted to practice in a situation in which I would have a personal connection to individual clients. Throughout my legal education, I took advantage of every family law opportunity available, including working at the Mediation Clinic and enrolling in a psychology graduate seminar on the effects of divorce on children. I believe I have obtained a well-rounded education that has prepared me for my career as a family law attorney.

R.B.: I was initially attracted to a graduate education in clinical psychology because the degree offers a combination of rigorous research experience and interactions with real people and problems. Research and the clinical work reinforce each other: clinical experience inspires research questions and research informs clinical practice. I have a long-standing interest in women’s issues and public policy – I volunteered on a domestic violence crisis line as an undergraduate and worked for several years in a state legislature before attending graduate school. The unique collaboration between law and psychology here at Indiana University allowed me to pursue these interests simultaneously. As a graduate student, I have had the opportunity to participate in a seminar on divorce with students from both law and psychology, to attend a conference hosted by both departments that brought together national experts in law
2. How are the interdisciplinary education and training opportunities different from other experiences or courses you have had so far?

M.N.: Unlike typical theory-based only law school courses, the Mediation Clinic provides law students with the ability to learn and use both legal theory and practical legal skills to help resolve real family disputes. Rather than work with hypothetical situations with outcomes that may vary across state lines, the Clinic allows students to master Indiana family law and apply their legal knowledge to a real-life dispute. By helping low-income parents reach their own agreements regarding their children, students transition out of the classroom and into the local court system. Students must be vigilant and diligent, as a mediation agreement must conform to the laws of the state and be approved by a judge and could have a profound effect on a family. Student mediators are given the challenge of educating families about the law and empowering them to reach their own customized agreement.

The Clinic also differs from many other non-clinical law school courses in the manner in which students are able to interact with faculty. The Director of the Clinic (Applegate) is wholly invested in providing students with the knowledge and resources to effectively mediate. There are no restricted “office hours” in this setting; instead, there is frequent and ongoing dialogue to discuss cases, problems, and strategies. By working so closely with a faculty member, student mediators build a professional relationship in a supportive environment and learn to make professional judgments.

The ability to take a graduate course in the psychology department was one of the most beneficial opportunities I have had at Indiana University. Law students were placed in a social
science classroom with the freedom to speak openly about the pros and cons of the legal system in regard to families. Instead of frantically typing on a laptop while a law professor drills a student with the Socratic method, each student in the seminar was responsible for leading classroom discussions. We were able to describe the legal process most families find themselves in while going through a divorce, and the psychology students were able to explain to us the emotional struggle a divorcing family faces.

R.B.: The graduate seminar included a mix of students from clinical psychology, counseling psychology, education and law backgrounds. Having this mix of people meant that many perspectives were available on a given topic, which slowed the discussion and forced people to think more broadly and more critically about the assumptions they carried into the class. An analogous situation was created at the IU Conference as psychology professors, law professors, judges and lawyers were brought into discussion together: it encouraged people to step out of their comfort zones.

Conducting interdisciplinary research on the clients served by the Mediation Clinic has added an additional layer of complexity to the research process. For example, not only does the research have to conform to Indiana University’s Institutional Review Board, it also must be consistent with the legal and ethical mandates set for mediators by Indiana State law. Doing interdisciplinary research also increases the number of dissemination opportunities (i.e. should the research be published in a psychology journal or a law review?) and increases the complexity of targeting multiple audiences for this information.

3. Why is interdisciplinary education important and what are the benefits?

M.N.: Many legal scholars have written on the benefits of interdisciplinary education, especially with respect to attorneys practicing in the area of family law. 75 UMKC L. Rev. 965,
968. Barbara Glesner Fines and Cathy Madsen state in their article “Caring Too Little, Caring Too Much: Competence and the Family Law Attorney” that to ignore fear, anger, anxiety, sadness, denial, or any other psychological states of mind is to leave the client in a condition that makes rational informed decision-making difficult, if not impossible. 982. Mediators who think that these feelings will have no effect on the mediation or who fail to show empathy will have a much harder time reaching agreements with the parties.

Throughout the psychology seminar, law students read and discussed numerous research studies documenting the consequences of divorce on children and families. There is no doubt that while law students and lawyers alike presume that divorce has significant effects on children and families, reviewing the empirical research concerning families and children who have been through a divorce was deeply disconcerting. Attorneys and mediators must recognize that when individuals go through a divorce, they may experience emotional trauma. As mediators, the law students had the ability to take that psychological research directly into our mediations and recognize the overwhelming need to support these families and help implement plans that will cause as little pain and destruction to the divorcing parents, and especially children, as possible. Without that recognition, we may not have explored various options or attempted to resolve disputes to meet specific emotional needs of the families.

One of the best outcomes of building this relationship between the Indiana University Law School and PBS Department has been figuring out a method for providing couples in our community with the both the legal and emotional support they need to navigate through a divorce. Through this collaboration, not only the law student mediators and psychology student therapists have become involved, but also the local judges have become increasingly interested in exploring the potential to reduce conflict and lessen the burden of litigation on families.
R.B.: Bringing law and psychology together has the potential to improve both disciplines. Many other universities have come to this conclusion. In fact, the American Psychology-Law Society (Division 41 of the American Psychological Association) lists twenty-one coordinated law and psychology degrees/programs nationwide (http://www.ap-ls.org/). Although the heaviest focus is on forensic psychology and criminal law, psychology research into topics such as program evaluation, developmental psychology and real-life decision-making stand to greatly affect the legal system as well. Psychologically informed legal education hopefully helps law students practice in a more sensitive and effective way, particularly in such areas as family law. Psychology has also benefited from responding to the needs of the legal system. As an example, research into eyewitness testimony uncovered important features of the way memory works.

Interdisciplinary work provides a reality check for both sides. In the divorce seminar that included both law and psychology students, there was a constant tension between how the legal system should operate and how it actually does operate. Too often the psychology students would fall into the trap of describing how we thought divorce cases should be handled (e.g., with thorough assessment for all cases in order to direct families to the appropriate intervention), while the law students would point out, based on their experience, that resources such as time, money and trained personnel, were not in place to do any such thing and given under-funding of the court system, we couldn’t expect the situation to abruptly get much better. Instead, law students advocated for brief screening instruments that were cheap and quick and could be administered by court personnel rather than mental-health professionals, raising new future avenues for psychology students to consider.

In translating our knowledge for one another, both professors and students are forced to solidify our own knowledge and broaden our understanding of the world. For example, when
psychology students were asked to clarify research methods for the law students, it was a good
teaching experience for us and led us to consider the limitations inherent in some of our
methodologies (e.g., inability to generalize findings from a study of Midwestern rural couples to
other settings and groups).

Finally, when the legal field is able to provide psychology researchers with access to data
in the legal system, we are able to study real-world processes much more effectively. Bringing
people into our labs to ask them, after the fact, how they felt about mediation pales in
comparison to asking them such questions in the moments right before they actually begin
mediation.

4. What are some of the challenges to interdisciplinary work? Why isn’t everyone doing it?

M.N.: Interdisciplinary work is not without its problems. In working closely with
psychology graduate students, law students often found themselves entirely lost in a world of
research methods, statistics, and psychological disorders. Conversely, psychology students found
themselves trying to wade through the legal process, court structure, and alternative dispute
resolution. While it was frustrating at the start, students were forced to slow down, take a step
back, and explain their discipline to the other side. Students quickly realized how important it
was to understand and be able to explain their own discipline, in order to effectively work
together in a classroom setting. This interaction brought out the tension between the ideal and
reality of a divorce. What the legal process provides to divorcing families and what the
psychological community would like to provide are vastly different.

As Sara R. Benson points out, there are many reasons for resistance from within the law
school and other disciplines to combine efforts in a clinic. 14 Cardozo J.L. & Gender 1, 5. Main
concerns include: coordination problems, professional independence issues, confidentiality,
attorney-client privilege, conflicts of interests 6, and providing proper supervision to students from multiple disciplines. 14 Cardozo J.L. & Gender 1, 15. As the Mediation Clinic and PBS Department further their collaboration, new challenges will continually emerge. Since interdisciplinary academic work is still in its infancy, there is no perfect system to implement.

R.B.: There are many ways in which interdisciplinary work adds an extra layer of complexity and challenge to research and education. Law and psychology often use different vocabularies and sometimes have competing world views. We ran into many instances in the seminar where the language of each discipline initially obscured our meanings. For example, the word “antisocial” meant something very different to the law students (akin to a hermit who doesn’t socialize) than to psychology students (who were speaking about the specific diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder, a disorder characterized by pervasive disregard for the rights of others and often an extensive criminal history). It took extra time to get everyone on the same page.

In some cases, the two disciplines have different goals and immediate needs. This was most evident at the IU Conference. As the conference participants discussed the presentations they had seen, it rapidly became clear that the judges and lawyers wanted the best solutions social science had to offer right then and there; their most pressing concern was how to best help the families that were going to walk into court that day. Psychologists tended to operate on a much longer time frame. Good research needs to examine outcomes both immediately and over time. Ideally, we would follow families for years to determine which interventions were most helpful and durable. Science also works requires replication: multiple studies conducted at different sites and by different research groups with diverse populations are needed to solidify recommendations. This sort of evidence takes time to accumulate.
It has been frustrating to make compromises in research design to accommodate legal realities. For example, the threat of a potential subpoena of our research data into a court case means that we may not collect any identifying information that could be linked with the data we collect, precluding the sort of long-term follow-up with families that we would ideally be doing.

Structural barriers to interdisciplinary work also exist. The PBS Department and the Law School are different schools within Indiana University. It can be difficult to take classes outside the department, and it requires extra work to get individualized minors approved. It is not surprising that departments are geared to handle their own internal requirements, but the result is that it takes additional effort from students to integrate work from other disciplines into a program of study. Beyond the university, it is not always obvious where this work fits into the wider world of research. It is difficult to find graduate fellowships that support work such as research on divorce mediation. By falling outside the traditional boundaries of diagnosis-based psychological research funding (i.e. research on depression or schizophrenia) or funding to study therapy outcomes, it isn’t clear where to look for support.

5. What personal challenges and benefits have you experienced?

M.N.: My personal experience as a mediator and student mentor in the Mediation Clinic has been wonderful. After two years of doctrinal legal education in a classroom, I was able to transfer my legal skills and put them to practice during my third year. Not only did I become a formally trained, state-registered domestic relations mediator, but I also provided a valuable service to low-income families in the community. As a mediator, I worked on real family disputes regarding custody, parenting time, child support, and property division. By educating the parties about the law, finding areas of compromise and using negotiation strategies, I was able to help separated parents reach and draft agreements tailored to their specific situations.
This service kept families out of the courtroom and empowered them to create solutions for their own individual needs.

Had I not taken the graduate psychology course on the consequences of divorce on children concurrently with the mediation clinic, I would undoubtedly have been far less patient with the parties and less understanding of their situation. After just a few weeks in the psychology course, I realized how important it was to let the parties to a mediation vent their frustrations, anger, and emotions. For example, instead of cutting off a woman who seemed to endlessly complain about the lack of emotional and financial support given by her ex-husband, I realized it was therapeutic for her to have me listen. If I sit back for a few minutes and let the parties vent at the start of the mediation while in separate rooms, they are usually able to calm down and be more rational during the mediation itself. So many parties walk into the mediation full of hurt feelings, and had I not learned about the effects of divorce on couples and families, I would have tried to cut off any emotional venting to get to the core of the mediation process. Having a little patience and showing empathy went much farther than I ever thought it would in a mediation.

Another example was a case in which I was asked to tell the ex-wife that her ex-husband and new wife were pregnant. The parties were in separate rooms due to a protective order the ex-wife had against her ex-husband over allegations that he was violent toward her and even threatened to kill her. Despite the anger the ex-wife showed and her genuine disgust for him, she broke down and cried when I told her of the pregnancy. While I could not help but think to myself, “Come on. You hate this man and you have a protective order against him. He’s threatened to shoot you. Be happy that you’re away from him,” I also understood her feelings of sadness over the loss of a relationship and the truth that her ex-husband had truly moved on.
Without the training on domestic violence and the effects of divorce from the psychology seminar, I probably would have looked at her like she was crazy and ignored her feelings. Instead, I listened to her. I told her that I understood it must be very hard for her to hear that news and allowed her to talk openly about her feelings. By not brushing aside her emotions, I was able to make her feel comfortable and show her that I recognized her pain. In this way, the mediation was not negatively affected by the news and we were able to move forward with an agreement.

At the IU Conference, legal and psychological scholars came together to discuss the effects of divorce on families and the ways to promote a positive outcome through mediation and other community services. An example beneficial experience was the presentation by Jenn McIntosh on Child-Inclusive Mediation. Her approach provided an illustration of how students from the two disciplines could sit together and say, “this is how we can work together and achieve our goals.” We could see child-inclusive mediation is a practical way to involve both disciplines to mitigate the legal and psychological ramifications of a divorce. By lessening the negative effects of the adversarial model of divorce through mediation and incorporating feelings and emotions of the entire family with the help of psychological professionals, the divorcing family may be better able to deal with their familial transition and focus on the mental and behavioral health of the children. Such presentations suggest future directions for interdisciplinary interaction.

R.B.: Personally, it has been both rewarding and frustrating to be involved in interdisciplinary work. While it is hard to compromise research design to meet the legal realities of a functioning mediation center, it has been great to jump straight in to researching real-world problems and issues. As I am not a law student, it has been challenging to learn about family law
in a haphazard way, but I have enjoyed adding a legal component to my psychology education and am looking forward to taking classes at the law school. There is a whole world of research possibilities on the topic of divorce mediation, from evaluating long-term outcomes, to creating motivational interventions that will nudge acrimonious couples to agreements, to improving screening for domestic violence or other causes of power imbalances in mediation.

6. Where should we go from here in education and research?

M.N.: Law students are trained to separate logic from emotions in order to competently and thoroughly analyze legal issues from a position of detachment. 21 Geo. Immigr. L.J. 163, 164. They are trained to view legal issues objectively and unemotionally, creating a wall between their feelings and their minds. 164. In traditional courses, law students study only cases and focus only on their legal principles, not upon the individuals involved in the dispute. 167. More specifically, in most cases, there are no law school classes that teach future family lawyers how to deal with the emotional impact of divorce. 6 Barry L. Rev. 1, 7. Marsha Freeman and James Hauser, in “Making Divorce Work: Teaching a Mental Health/Legal Paradigm to a Multidisciplinary Student Body,” have found that law schools continue to prepare family law attorneys to deal with the break-up of a marriage much as they would the dissolution of a business partnership. Barry 7. Yet individual clients bring their fears, hopes, anger, pain and distrust to the lawyer-client relationship. Geo. 167. Students need specialized training if they are to represent such clients effectively. Geo. 169.

Sara R. Benson, author of “Beyond Protective Orders: Interdisciplinary Domestic Violence Clinics Facilitate Social Change,” argues that interdisciplinary clinics are particularly useful for large universities with multiple areas of specialization. 14 Cardozo J.L. & Gender 1, 5. By working together, legal and extra-legal specialists can combine their efforts to provide
necessary training for students and much needed assistance for families. 5. The cooperation between law students and psychology students will ultimately help the parties to a mediation become mentally and emotionally prepared to focus on their mediation. A law student trained in basic psychology might be better able to empathize with a party and understand his or her reasoning. 9. Interdisciplinary clinics can also provide law students with a unique opportunity to actively engage with local community members and organizations to promote positive systems changes. 10.

It is no secret that law schools today need to align legal education more closely with the realities of law practice. 37 U. Tol. L. Rev. 81, 81. The realistic needs of new lawyers must be more appropriately met in law school. As a human being, a lawyer forms bonds with his client, reacts and relates to his client’s emotions, and feels responsible for the well-being of individuals and communities. Geo. 198. Interdisciplinary law approaches may actually encourage some lawyers to rediscover the values and care-oriented preferences that were silenced upon entering law school. Pepp. 59. Clinical programs, like the Mediation Clinic, and interdisciplinary academic work are unequivocally a step in the right direction to effectively train students for the comprehensive practice of law.

R.B.: Although the challenges are significant, we have been handed an extraordinary opportunity to help families in crisis. Psychological research can provide data to begin to help answer some of the most vexing questions in the fields of family law and alternative dispute resolution, such as whether divorce mediation is appropriate for couples who have a history of domestic violence, or what interventions can increase the motivation of high-conflict couples to come to an agreement in mediation rather than pursuing endless rounds of litigation. Providing the resources to pursue answers to these questions will not be easy. In a time of funding cuts at
the largest government research institutions, financial resources are hard won. Beyond money, finding courts and mediation programs that are willing to take on the added burden of being part of the research process can be difficult. Research design requirements (such as random assignment to group condition) are sometimes at odds with the requirements of conducting legal proceedings. Continued creativity and flexibility will be needed to close that gap and ensure that the needs of the research and legal communities are satisfied.

To date, my interdisciplinary training has taught me that I needed to adjust my conceptualization of divorce for those couples who have children. It is not a one-time event but an ongoing negotiation between two parents with proven difficulties getting along: less a product and more a process. An agreement, whether settled between parties or handed down by a judge, is only the beginning. Psychological research that informs the understanding of developmental processes that aid or hinder cooperation for parents can assist the legal community in predicting future performance of the couples who come before them. There is tantalizing initial evidence that mediation does have the power to affect co-parent interactions over a very long time span (Emery’s 12 year follow-up study), but these results await replication in other jurisdictions.

The continued hybridization of law and psychology will ideally lead to empirically supported psycholegal interventions. The goal is to turn interdisciplinary work into a practice that invigorates and informs both disciplines while making the lives of our clients measurably better.