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President's Message

There's Always One More Option/Opportunity

Mindy Mitnick, AFCC President

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

~ Winston Churchill



In Minnesota every year (well, almost), the AAML chapter sponsors a Divorce Camp. My first opportunity to attend the meeting was in the mid-nineties when the conference invited then-AFCC President John Kydd to speak. I don't remember the topic, but I do recall being inspired by John to work on legislation that allowed Minnesota parents to develop their own parenting plans instead of the Court imposing a parenting schedule. [Read more.](#)

AFCC 59th Annual Conference

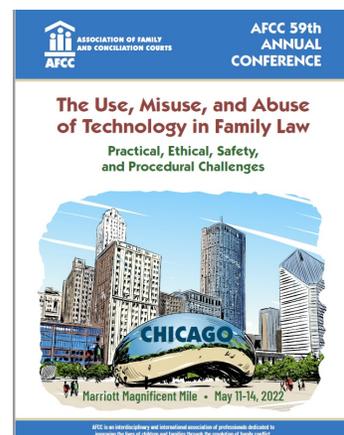
The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Technology in Family Law: Practical, Ethical, Safety, and Procedural Challenges

May 11-14, 2022

AFCC 59th Annual Conference

Chicago, Illinois

May 11-14, 2022



Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

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Conference Registration

Discounted prices on the conference and pre-conference institute registration will end on **Friday, April 29, 2022.**

Register now to save! Choose the best method of registration for you:

- **Register online**
- **Email your registration form to afcc@afccnet.org**
- **Call the AFCC office** to complete your registration over the phone (608-664-3750)
- **Mail your registration form and payment** to 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719
- **Fax your registration form** to 608-664-3751

Reserve Your Hotel Room Now!

Make your hotel reservation today! The Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$229 per night for single/double occupancy. **Reserve online** or call 1-877-303-0104 and request the AFCC special rate.

Health & Safety Information

Proof of vaccination, or a lab result indicating you are negative for COVID-19, received within 72 hours of May 11, 2022, is required to attend the conference. At-home test will not be accepted.

AFCC encourages the use of masks, especially while in close proximity to others. Please be respectful of the health and safety preferences of all conference participants.

AFCC 59th Annual Conference By the Numbers

How many great experiences are in store for you at the AFCC 59th Annual Conference? Let's crunch some numbers!*

- **14 days** until the conference
- **2 days** at the current price point (Better **register now!**)
- **4 days** of conference programming and social events
- Up to **20.5 hours of continuing education** credit (**Learn more.**)
- **6 pre-conference institutes** (**Read about them!**)
- **1 opening session:** *Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence: Promise and Pitfalls in Family Courts*
- **1 plenary session:** *Mind the Gap: Technology, Access, Connection, Equity, and Justice*
- **71 workshops** (**Plan your conference!**)
- **Over 150 knowledgeable presenters**
- **32 exhibit tables** to visit! Meet the conference sponsors and exhibitors, plus information from AFCC and our collaborating organizations! (**Meet them!**)
- **Several opportunities to connect with colleagues**, including the welcome reception, luncheon and awards, banquet, entertainment, live auction, breaks, hospitality suite, and more!
- **Hundreds of AFCC conference attendees** to meet and learn from!



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15th Symposium on Child Custody

Las Vegas, Nevada
November 10-12, 2022



Save the date!

AFCC Chapter Conferences

New Jersey Chapter Annual Meeting

AFCC Banquet, Entertainment, and Live Auction

After the conference sessions on Friday, May 13th, a lively evening awaits you. Enjoy the company of your AFCC colleagues at the banquet, where attendees will share laughs, courtesy of Greg Schwem. ([View his greeting to AFCC conference attendees!](#))

The live auction will include the following items:

- **A one-week stay at an oceanfront condo on the island of Kauai.** [Learn more and view pictures.](#)
- **A one-week stay at an ocean view condo on the island of Maui.** [Learn more and view pictures.](#)
- **Conference package for Los Angeles (AFCC 60th Annual Conference):** Includes conference registration and three nights at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites Los Angeles.
- **Conference package for Boston (AFCC 61st Annual Conference):** Includes conference registration and three nights at the Sheraton Boston Hotel.

Planning Your Visit to Chicago

The location of Chicago's Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile couldn't be better for exploring the Windy City! Within an eight-block radius of the hotel, you'll find well over 200 restaurants and bars. Don't leave Chicago empty-handed! You can shop at Water Tower Place, Merchandise Mart, the Shops at North Bridge, and more.

Many popular tourist destinations can be found a short walk from the hotel, including the Chicago Riverwalk, Millennium Park (see the iconic sculpture Cloud Gate, aka "The Bean," up close!), and the Museum of Contemporary Art. The following attractions are a short drive or longer walk from the hotel: Navy Pier, the Shedd Aquarium, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Field Museum of Natural History, and more. Extend your stay to take full advantage of all that Chicago has to offer! [Learn more about the Magnificent Mile.](#)

[Register Now!](#)

Better Understanding What Works for Divorcing and Separating Parents:

Introducing the Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative

Renée Wilkins-Clark, MS; Melinda Stafford Markham, PhD; and Anthony J. Ferraro, PhD

Currently co-directed by two faculty in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Kansas State University (Dr. Melinda Stafford Markham and Dr. Anthony J. Ferraro), the [Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative](#) (DEAC) was established in response to consistent calls from researchers, educators, practitioners, and policy makers citing a need for standardized evaluation, with consistent assessment tools, to better determine the effectiveness of programs for divorcing and separating parents. As a first step in this process, the DEAC evaluation (a standardized measurement tool for use with divorce and co-parenting education programs) was created by a core group of seven members (four faculty and three graduate students) affiliated with five universities across five states. DEAC members reviewed numerous measures related to the process of divorce. Emphasis was placed on measures that were brief, designed and appropriate for adult

respondents, and demonstrated reliability, face validity, and external validity. [Read more.](#)

[Family Court Review Call for Papers: Special Issue](#)

The Changing Landscape of Parenting Education Programs for Divorcing and Separating Parents

Guest Editors: Anthony J. Ferraro and Melinda Stafford Markham, *Kansas State University*

This special issue provides an opportunity for a holistic view of parenting education programs for divorcing and separating parents, and we are inviting manuscripts that explore the topic from a diversity of perspectives. Given the range of professional fields that parenting education in the context of divorce and separation involves, interdisciplinary collaborations and submissions from multiple perspectives are encouraged (e.g., social scientists, judges, lawyers, mediators, therapists, program facilitators). Submit your 250-500 word abstract by December 1, 2022. [Learn more.](#)

[Save the Date for the AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody!](#)

From a Full House to Parenting Apart

November 10-12, 2022

*Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada*

Save the date for the AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody now! Stay tuned for additional information, including the conference brochure, schedule, preconference institutes, plenary session, opening session, workshops, registration, scholarship opportunities, continuing education information, hotel accommodations, and more. [View and print the Save the Date flyer.](#)

[AFCC Webinar Corner](#)

[Authentication Issues with Digital Evidence in Child Custody Cases](#)

Nicholas Himonidis, JD and Moderator: Larry Braunstein, JD

May 19, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on May 18, 2022, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Technology is a significant part of everyday life. In family court matters, digital evidence is relied upon for a variety of reasons, including as proofs of allegations in custody cases. However, not all digital evidence is reliable and not all digital evidence is legitimate. Through this webinar, an attorney and expert in digital evidence, computer forensics, and fraud will explore important considerations for reviewing and authenticating data that tells a story before relying on it and presenting it to the court.

Nicholas G. Himonidis, JD, has 30 years of experience in fraud investigations, computer forensics, and law. He is the President/CEO of The NGH Group, Inc., specializing in complex investigations, digital forensics, e-Discovery, cryptocurrency and blockchain forensics, and cyber security. Mr. Himonidis is an attorney, Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), Certified Computer Forensic Specialist (CCFS), Certified Cryptocurrency Forensic Investigator (CCFI), and licensed Private Investigator. Mr. Himonidis has conducted and supervised forensic investigations in numerous high profile matrimonial and custody matters. He has also been appointed by the Supreme Court in multiple New York counties as a computer forensic expert and as a cryptocurrency expert.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Continuing education credit may be available for lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals. [Learn more.](#)

[Register today!](#)

Resist and Refuse Cases: Making the Case to the Court

Larry Braunstein, JD

June 21, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on June 20, 2022, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

[Register now!](#)

Chapter News

The Ontario Chapter of AFCC congratulates the winners of the Walsh Family Law Moot and Negotiation Competition. The Walsh Family Negotiation Competition is a competition for 2nd and 3rd year law students. Working in teams of two, using facts for each partner in a family law dispute, the law students will negotiate with opposing teams in three successive rounds of increasing complexity.

Awards and recognition were given to the teams for best negotiation plans, best overall negotiation teams, and best individual student. [View the AFCC-Ontario website](#) for a full list of award recipients.

Growth in Memberships

Kudos to the **North Carolina** provisional Chapter which is well on its way to Chartered Chapter status. Under the leadership of Kim Bonuomo and April Harris-Britt, and with the tremendous support of Danielle Kestnbaum, North Carolina has more than doubled their membership in less than a year.

Louisiana currently leads the Chapter Challenge for greatest overall percentage increase in membership, with president, Patti Oppenheim; president-elect, Maggie Simar; and immediate past-president, Leslie Todd, and an incredible Board leading the efforts.

The **Utah** Chapter currently leads the Chapter Challenge for greatest numerical increase in members, through the leadership of Dan Spencer, and support of volunteers, Todd Wetsel, Laura Hansen, Jaclyn Robertson, and Mitch Brooks, with 168 members as they approach a motion for Chartered Chapter status at the annual conference in Chicago.

We are in the home stretch with the Chapter Challenge, which closes on May 1st. The winners in both categories will share a \$5,000 prize! A special thanks to all Chapters for participating in a friendly competition to bring an increase in members to the AFCC family!

Member News

Peter Boshier, AFCC member and former AFCC president (2015-16) from Wellington, New Zealand, has been elected as Second Vice President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI). He has served on the board of the IOI, a global organization made up of more than 200 independent ombudsman institutions from more than 100 countries, since 2016. "I am honoured to serve the role of Second Vice President," he said. "This

election was based on the high performance of my office, and the fact that we are resourced accordingly to enable us to do the work we do in the international space.”
Congratulations, Peter!



Alexander D. Jones, AFCC Board member from Needham, Massachusetts, has been recognized as a 2022 honoree in Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly’s annual Excellence in the Law Awards. Alex is honored in the “Excellence in ADR” category. This annual event recognizes some of the most significant accomplishments in the Massachusetts Legal Community. Alex is an experienced mediator and litigator. He has dual degrees from Boston College Law School and Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. He has been appointed by numerous Justices of the Probate and Family Court to serve as a Guardian ad Litem, a parent coordinator, and a discovery master. He has been a member of the AFCC Board of Directors since 2019. Congratulations, Alex!



Do you have a notable achievement to share? Email [Gina Wentling](#) with your story and a professional head shot or book image (PNG preferred), if you have one, to be featured in next month's Member News!

AFCC eNEWS

The *AFCC eNEWS* is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The *eNEWS* provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe. [Subscribe here.](#)

AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

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Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) | 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719

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President's Message: There's Always One More Option/Opportunity

Mindy Mitnick, AFCC President

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. ~ Winston Churchill

In Minnesota every year (well, almost), the AAML chapter sponsors a Divorce Camp. My first opportunity to attend the meeting was in the mid-nineties when the conference invited then-AFCC President John Kydd to speak. I don't remember the topic, but I do recall being inspired by John to work on legislation that allowed Minnesota parents to develop their own parenting plans instead of the Court imposing a parenting schedule.

The leadership of AAML soon wanted to move the conference in a different direction: Towards improving the practice of family law and family law-related services by mediators, mental health practitioners, and financial professionals. Since we always meet in the heart of the Minnesota lakes region, they developed their humorous Divorce Camp logo of two people in a canoe rowing in opposite directions.



I have an indelible memory of the title of a speech given by the Chief Family Court judge from the state's largest county: "There's Always One More Option." I have used this to guide my work: when parents are stuck in mediation without another idea, when my PC clients are mired in "either/or," and when I have sat in meetings and we seem unable to come up with a better proposal for the task at hand. I have expanded the judge's message to include opportunity: Every time we interview a child, we can learn something new – about children and about better interviews. Every time we work with parents to resolve a dispute, we can learn something about empathy: how easily we feel it with some clients and how hard we have to work at it with others.

Every time we hire or serve as an expert witness, we can use the opportunity to update our knowledge base on relevant issues such as adverse childhood experiences, the impact of domestic violence on family members, and gender diverse children.

In the Fall of 2009, Peter Salem, our Executive Director, wrote a column for the *AFCC NEWS* about the difficult questions on the AFCC horizon. There were and there remain questions whose answers we struggle with, within and between our disciplines, on access to justice, promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, expanding our dialogues about hard topics like alienation, building consensus on best practices, and doing it all with a spirit of collegiality. He wrote about the AFCC organizational values that keep us thriving and they remain true and important more than a decade later:

- Collaboration and respect among disciplines and professions
- Learning through inquiry, discussion and debate
- Innovation in addressing the needs of families and children in conflict
- Empowering families to resolve conflict and make decisions about their future.
- Diversity in family structures and cultures.

To that list I would add: sustaining each of our professions. To younger professionals, family law can seem like an arena fraught with conflict rather than one filled with possibilities to ensure positive outcomes for parents and children. AFCC is the professional family that nurtures our younger colleagues and helps them grow into seasoned professionals who then hand off the baton to the next generation in the skillful relay we “run” together. If you are an E2M member (early to mid-career), AFCC conferences offer unique opportunities to connect with more “senior” members and start a conversation you can keep going after you return home. If you are a mid-to-late career member, you can reach out to younger, newer members and grow your perspective on current challenges to those who are establishing themselves in their field of practice. Working together we will keep AFCC the unique organization that continues to meet and even anticipate the fields’ needs.

Each day we get to use our voice
To raise the tide or let it ebb
Each day we face a simple choice
To nurture life or fray its web

Let’s let the world be better still
For every moment we’re alive
Because we choose to use our will
To make our earth a place to thrive.

Wayne Visser © 2021

A personal goal of mine has been to support our younger members through consultation, both formal – through peer-to-peer groups – and informal, through emails from them that always start with “Just a quick question.” Our E2M Committee provides opportunities on the international level, such as get-togethers at conferences. If we want to grow our profession, I think we have to acknowledge that it may be hard for a younger professional to seek out one with more experience and recognition in the field. I also suggest that our “older” members reach out to someone in your own community to begin a conversation and, hopefully, an ongoing relationship that encourages them to continue to do the work and helps them when they hit a pothole in their career path. Mentoring fills me with hope: hope for the future of our professions through a continued commitment to excellence by my younger colleagues.

This May in Chicago, I counted 100 opportunities that we have at the Annual conference: to see old friends and colleagues, to meet new colleagues and make new friends, to eat with us, to drink with us (coffee, tea, and the hospitality suite), to laugh with us at the banquet, stretch with us at yoga and meditation in the morning, and bid with us at the LIVE auction.

Research in Israel found that enjoyment of social contact depends on whether you have control over it. Dr. Liad Uziel reported that “our emotions are so much more intense when we’re with other people compared to when we’re alone.” Carpe diem (seize the day) and join AFCC in person in Chicago and in Las Vegas this Fall.

In a world full of
Problems, be the solution.
Every choice does count.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mindy Mitnick". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the motivational text.



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Better Understanding What Works for Divorcing and Separating Parents: Introducing the Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative

Renée Wilkins-Clark, MS; Melinda Stafford Markham, PhD; and Anthony J. Ferraro, PhD

About Us

Currently co-directed by two faculty in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Kansas State University (Dr. Melinda Stafford Markham and Dr. Anthony J. Ferraro), the [Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative](#) (DEAC) was established in response to consistent calls from researchers, educators, practitioners, and policy makers citing a need for standardized evaluation, with consistent assessment tools, to better determine the effectiveness of programs for divorcing and separating parents. As a first step in this process, the DEAC evaluation (a standardized measurement tool for use with divorce and co-parenting education programs) was created by a core group of seven members (four faculty and three graduate students) affiliated with five universities across five states. DEAC members reviewed numerous measures related to the process of divorce. Emphasis was placed on measures that were brief, designed and appropriate for adult respondents, and demonstrated reliability, face validity, and external validity. These considerations were meant to ensure quality, parsimony, and utility in measurement.

An initial pre-test, a post-test, and a set of supplemental measures were developed. Although a central goal of this effort is standardization, building out a detailed set of supplementary measures was a necessary step as there is a high degree of variability in the content and design of these courses. The developed assessment tool was presented to members of a professional organization focus group that specializes in co-parenting and divorce education as well as the DEAC advisory group, which consists of 14 researchers and educators working in a wide range of positions, from for-profit entities to university settings. Both groups provided feedback on the

measures, and the evaluation tools were revised and finalized. For more information on this process and the background of the DEAC initiative see Markham and colleagues (2021).

The final DEAC measurement tool consists of standardized pre- and post-tests, with optional follow ups, as well as content-specific supplementary measures that are tailored to the specific content and delivery of each program, available for both online and in-person, synchronous and asynchronous divorce education courses. It is currently being utilized by five different divorce education programs in the United States. These programs range from university-affiliated organizations to for-profit entities, and vary in duration, educational methods, and content. Three of these programs are actively collecting and analyzing their own data, using the DEAC assessment tool. For the other two programs, the DEAC group is providing direct evaluation services, which include implementation, reporting, and dissemination of findings. Additionally, programs can share their de-identified data back to the DEAC, enabling our team to analyze data across multiple programs. This allows for multi-site data housing and large-scale evaluation with cross-program data beyond anything that has previously been done in this area of research. Partner programs and DEAC work on a data sharing agreement, through a protocol already established and approved by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board. Once the agreement is in place, opportunities for collaboration and analysis of aggregated data become available to programs.

Why does this matter?

Currently, there is inconsistency in structure, length, mandates, and requirements for divorce education across states and jurisdictions and little empirical support for what formats/structures work best for divorcing and separating parents. Although divorce education programs are expected to enhance family adjustment, programs have not been evaluated with robust and/or consistent evaluation methods (Ferraro et al., 2016). Absent rigorous evaluation, it will remain challenging to determine which programmatic elements work best for divorcing or separating families. Even beyond this, little is known about what works well for specific family contexts (e.g., parents of young children, those who have repartnered, or individuals in high conflict situations with or without a protection order).

Collecting and analyzing these multisite data will allow our team to obtain information regarding the effectiveness of programs and their utility to meet the needs of diverse family situations. Such information can be used to better inform facilitators of divorce education programs, those who work with divorcing or separating couples, and individuals who advise or require parents to complete education programs. Understanding the overall effectiveness of these programs for families can provide much-needed information to have confidence that the programs parents are being referred to will positively impact their families, and perhaps more apt, in what contexts might certain programs be best suited for certain types of families or the presence of certain family circumstances.

Having quality divorce education programming that is a right fit for the families that the programs are meant to serve is important for parents and children alike. Through these programs,

parents may learn skills and information that, if applied, can help parents to maintain promotive family processes such as high-quality co-parenting, minimizing conflicts, and decreasing litigation (Schramm & Becher, 2020). Additionally, parents will be able to model better behaviors for their children, aiding in children's coping/welfare, and potentially decrease negative divorce-related outcomes. Although we have some understanding that these programs can have positive effects, it is more difficult, at the moment, to answer who they serve best and what types of content, delivery modes, or circumstances seem to make the most profound impact on families.

Ways to Help with Divorce Education Assessment!

To better determine the effectiveness of divorce education programs across the United States, we need your help.

Lawyers and Judges: Ask program facilitators that you work with to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs. How do you know that what they are doing is working? Share information about the Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative with those programs! Ask them to use the DEAC evaluation tool and have their data incorporated into the multi-site data collection effort to help determine program effectiveness and if there are certain audiences or situations that are well-suited for their particular program.

Educators: Contact the DEAC for a consultation and join our efforts to put forward the best possible programming for parents and demonstrate the effectiveness of your efforts! Additionally, if you are interested in a third-party evaluation, the DEAC can provide additional evaluation services, including collecting data from participants, data analysis, and providing reports on program effectiveness.

Contact information

Email: deacollaborative@ksu.edu

Twitter: @ksu_deacollab

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- Ferraro, A. J., Malespin, T., Oehme, K., Bruker, M., & Opel, A. (2016). Advancing co-parenting education: Toward a foundation for supporting positive post-divorce adjustment. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 33, 407-415. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-016-0440-x>
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Renée Wilkins-Clark is a doctoral candidate in the Applied Family Science program and Social Justice Education certificate program at Kansas State University, and she is an incoming Assistant Professor in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado, Denver. She obtained her bachelor's degree in Family Studies and Human Services, her master's in Applied Family Science, and a certificate in Conflict Resolution from K-State. Her primary research involves family relationships in the context of transition and trauma, with an emphasis on sibling relationships. She is currently the Project Manager for the Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative.



Dr. Melinda Stafford Markham is an Associate Professor and Interim Department Head in the Applied Human Sciences Department at Kansas State University. Markham has a bachelor's degree in Family Studies and Human Services from Kansas State University, and a master's and doctorate in Human Development and Family Studies with a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies from the University of Missouri. Her primary research interest is post-divorce relationships, principally co-parenting relationships between former partners.

Markham serves as Co-Director for the national [Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative](#), and also currently serves on Editorial Boards for the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, Family Court Review, and Family Relations. She has also been recognized as an EAB Rising Higher Education Leaders Fellow and serves as the Kansas State University Faculty Senate Past President.



Dr. Anthony J. Ferraro is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Kansas State University. Ferraro has a bachelor's degree in Legal Studies from the University of Central Florida and a doctorate in Human Development and Family Science from Florida State University. His primary research involves family-level factors during periods of transition, with an emphasis on divorcing families and co-parenting relationships. He is a Co-Director of the Divorce Education Assessment Collaborative, is the current Chair of the Family Policy section for the National Council on Family Relations, and is a member of the editorial boards for Family Court Review and the Journal of Divorce and Remarriage.

