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Children of divorce : implication to teaching

Gloria Mao
University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract

The primary focus of this paper is the causes of divorce and their effects on elementary-age children. The adjustment problems of children of divorce in classrooms are examined. The importance of teachers' roles in easing the transition to school for children of divorce is emphasized. Teachers are assumed to be in a better position to observe the changes of children of divorce and to help them to adjust to their parents' divorce. By being sensitive and supportive, teachers can make a difference in their students' lives. A 7-hour workshop designed to enhance teachers' understanding about children of divorce is described.

CHILDREN OF DIVORCE: IMPLICATION TO TEACHING

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Master of Arts in Education: General Educational Psychology

Radhi H. Al-Mabuk

Director of Research Paper

Charles Dedrick

Co-Reader of Research Paper

Radhi H. Al-Mabuk

Graduate Faculty Advisor

Barry J. Wilson

Head, Department of Educational
Psychology & Foundations

5/14/1997
Date Approved

Acknowledgment

God is there all the time

Dr. Al-Mabuk gave me a light

Dr. Dedrick & Wilson are very kind

Professors in E.P. are my guide

Parents' support afford my life

Too many thanks, too many sighs

Don't need to stay up one more night

It's time for me to say good-bye

Tomorrow will be an another sight

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Abstract

The primary focus of this paper is the causes of divorce and their effects on elementary-age children. The adjustment problems of children of divorce in classrooms are examined. The importance of teachers' roles in easing the transition to school for children of divorce is emphasized. Teachers are assumed to be in a better position to observe the changes of children of divorce and to help them to adjust to their parents' divorce. By being sensitive and supportive, teachers can make a difference in their students' lives. A 7-hour workshop designed to enhance teachers' understanding about children of divorce is described.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the 1960s, the nuclear family was the dominant family structure in the United States. Now, only 7 percent of American families are nuclear families with both biological parents, and one or more children (Carlile, 1991). In 1989, London (1989) reported that the divorce rate has decreased and stabilized since 1980s. However, In 1992, Fogas, Wolchik, Braver, Freedom, and Bay still reported that at least 60 percent of marriages probably end in divorce.

London (1989) also indicated that more and more parents are unwilling to stay together for the sake of their children. As a result, children become the victims of parental divorce. Although the issue of children of divorce is not an unusual issue anymore, seldom do researchers focus on the relationship between teachers and students who are from maritally disrupted homes. Thus, this paper will discuss the impact of divorce on children with particular focus on the implications to teaching students from broken homes.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce is not the end of pain, neither is it the beginning

of happiness. On the contrary, many new problems emerge after divorce, including custodial problems, environmental change, or remarriage adjustment. More than one million children experience the parental divorce in the United States each year. Children of divorce may experience adjustment problems, including social withdrawal, economic hardship, low academic achievement, and psychological illness (Butler, Mellon, Stroh, and Stern, 1995). Every single change or problem has the potential to affect the well-being of the children of divorce. Attention must therefore be paid to help children cope with their parental divorce.

Significance of the Problem

Most parents have to make some adjustments following their divorce. Despite their efforts to help their children get used to a new family configuration, the stressful experience of divorce impairs parents' ability to take good care of their children. Children of divorce may experience short-term or long-term negative consequences (Amato, 1993). As parents and their children make adjustment to divorce, teachers probably would need to observe the change in children of divorce. Since teachers have daily contact with these children, they are

in a better position to observe changes that the divorce may have on children. According to Carlile (1991), millions of American children try to learn to adjust to their parents' divorce in classroom settings. When teachers pay attention to children of divorce and gain more knowledge about children of divorce, they would more likely spend less time disciplining these students. Butler et al. (1995) found that children of divorce have more classroom misbehavior, poorer peer relationship, less internal locus of control, and lower academic achievement. In addition, children of divorce are often reported to be more absent from school, to have more accidental injuries, and to experience more minor medical problems (Butler et al., 1995). Thus, teachers need to provide a warm and safe environment for all children, especially for children of divorce.

Definition of Terms

Several terms used throughout this paper are defined as following.

Academic achievement. The measurement of students' knowledge in learning toward school subjects by the official rank list.

Egocentrism. The characteristic of being self-centered or indifferent to others.

External locus of control. The individuals believe that events are as a result of outside factors, such as luck, fate or efforts of others (Fogas et al., 1992).

Intact family. A complete family that consists of two biological parents and their children.

Internal locus of control. The individuals use to account for their own behavior or their level of successful performance by their own personal abilities, efforts, or other characteristics control performance (Shafritz, Koeppel, & Soper, 1988).

Marital dissolution. The marriage is disintegrated into parts. There are three forms of marital dissolution which are the divorce, the death of one spouse, and the separation of married couples (Cherlin, 1992).

Nuclear family. A family has two biological parents, two or three children, and at one home.

Proactive discipline. It is an attempt to prevent the misbehavior from occurring.

Psychological maltreatment. It is a cognitive aspects of

child maltreatment both acts of omission and commission, including verbal and emotional assault, inadequate affection, or closing confinement (Klosinski, 1993).

Reactive discipline. It is an improvisation classroom management, and a fly-by-the-seat approach to create consequences in order to make up every single misbehavior (Ban, 1994).

Self-fulfilling prophecy. The notion of a false prediction which widely believed by people finally becomes true.

Step parent. The man or woman who is married to someone's mother or father but is not their real father or mother.

Self-esteem. The individuals who have belief and confidence in their own ability and value about one's worth.

The latency stage. It begins from age six to age twelve in a child development.

Limitation of Paper

First of all, this paper will focus on the teachers' supportive role in helping children of divorce rather than what parents, community or counselors can do for children of divorce. Secondly, this paper will only discuss divorce and children of divorce in the United States. Thirdly, this paper

will focus on the elementary school level, because Carlile (1991) believed that children at the elementary age are the most affected and vulnerable by parental divorce.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review consists of five parts: (1) an historical perspective about divorce; (2) causes of divorce; (3) common reactions to parental divorce; (4) the consequences of divorce on children; and (5) a conclusion.

Historical Perspective

The historical perspective will first present a brief historical account of divorce rates and then provides statistics on children affected by divorce.

History of Divorce Rate

In 1867, there were 9937 divorces in the United States. By 1929, there were 201,468 divorces, an increase of almost 20 times since 1867. Although the population also increased from 1867 to 1929, the percentage increase in the population hardly compared to half the increase of percentage in divorce (Friedman, 1995). In 1950, there were 299,000 divorces. Between 1960 and 1980, divorce rate continued to increase dramatically. By 1980s, the divorce rate had reached the peak (1,180,000 in 1981), and gradually leveled off since then. At least 50 percent of marriages will end in divorce nowadays

(Ahlburg & DeVita, 1992; Cherlin, 1995; Fogas et al., 1992; Friedman, 1995; London, 1989; Stevenson & Black, 1995)

Number of Children Involved

According to a 1989 report by the National Center for Health Statistics (London, 1989), there were 6.3 per 1,000 children were affected by parental divorce in 1950. By 1984, children involved in parental divorce had reached to 17.2 per 1,000. Children were one of the major consideration when contemplating divorce in 1950s. In 1956, there were 0.95 children for divorcing couples, and 1.30 children for married couples. However, staying together for the sake of the children had changed since then. In the 1980s, there was an equal number of children for both divorcing couples and married couples (London, 1989). In 1980, 20 percent of children were in single-parent homes (Berner, 1992). Between 1980s and 1990s, 35 percent of children were affected by parental divorce (Stevenson & Black, 1995). In the 1990s, 30 percent of children are raised in single-parent homes, 40 percent of children are involved in parental divorce, and 50 percent of children will spend some time in single-parent home (Berner, 1992; Kalter, 1990; Stevenson & Black, 1995). By the year of

2000, 60 percent of children will spend part of their lives in single-parent homes (Carlile, 1991).

Causes of Divorce

The causes of divorce are complicated, and researchers have described different causes of marital dissolution. For example, White (1990) reported that the causes of divorce in 1980s were related more to macrostructural or demographic factors, such as gender roles, cultural values, age at marriage, or fertility within marriage. Since macrostructural or demographic factors are external to the marital relationship, this paper will focus more on the internal causes of divorce. That is, the focus will be on the actual relationship between husband and wife. The major causes of divorce to be emphasized include lack of love, communication difficulties, lack of mutuality, marital conflict, and lack of emotional intimacy. Each of these causes is discussed in more detail next.

Lack of Love

Individuals get married simply because they love each other. When the couple falls out of love, marital breakdown is likely to result for a couple (Kayser, 1993). No-fault divorce

law makes it easy for a couple to use "lack of love" as a reason for getting a divorce (Kayser, 1993). Although lack of love is one of major causes of divorce, what makes love die is a real reason behind the lack of love.

Communication Difficulties

Kincaid and Caldwell (1995) found that communication difficulties are the most common cause of marital separation. Kalter (1990) indicated that people automatically use anger to protect themselves from hurt. If anger is the direct self-protective response, verbal abuse will be the fastest way to deliver the message of anger. When conversational communication turns into negative verbal explosion, most couples learn to either keep silent or to avoid dealing with the issue. Gradually, communication difficulties begin to hamper the quality of the marital relationship and increase the chance for divorce.

Lack of Mutuality

In a mutual relationship, couples should respect each other and treat one another as equal partners. According to interview data gathered by Kayser (1992), most spouses felt that there was a lack of mutuality in their marriage. Most of

the respondents in Kayser's study indicated that their partners tried to control and change them. When spouses attempted to control their partners, they did not take into account their partners' thoughts and feelings. If their partners failed to follow their way, they criticized the behaviors of their partners and were unwilling to compromise with them (Kayser, 1992). Napier (1988) also agreed that a high level of criticism resulted in an unhappy marriage. Thus, lack of mutuality serves as one of the primary contributors to marriage breakdown.

Marital Conflicts

Ucko (1995) described that "The reason for conflict may range from trivial to critical. The issue may be as inconsequential as how one drinks milk or as serious as cuckolding a husband" (p. 26). It is obvious that marital conflict is a common issue among most couples, but the challenge is how much time and energy couples are willing to put forth to resolve their conflicts. Gill (1992) asserted that divorce is often the culmination of prior marital conflict.

Lack of Emotional Intimacy

Kayser (1993) found that lack of emotional intimacy is the heading factor and cause of marital dissatisfaction. Most of the spouses, especially females, complained that their partners did not understand their feelings or nor did they satisfy their emotional needs. Substance abuse was also mentioned as one of the major reasons that contributed to the lack of emotional intimacy in their marriage. Substance abusers were often unable to trust others and had a low sense of self-esteem. According to Kayser (1993), drug abusers and alcoholics were afraid of intimacy. Thus, couples who are in substance abuse systems will heighten the risk of divorce (Amato, 1993). The above section presented common causes of divorce, the next section addresses common reactions to parental divorce.

Common Reactions to Parental Divorce

Mike, an 8-year-old boy, went to a military day camp in the summer of 1996. Mike's misbehavior made him special and unforgettable among the 60 kids in that day camp. He was a very aggressive boy; he fought all the time; he was a trouble maker who had numerous incident and accident reports for the entire summer. Mike was experiencing the aftermath of his parents' divorce that summer. Because his parents were already

separated, he had to move back and forth between two households before the custodial problem was settled. He did not know how to express his anger and fear toward the divorce of his parents. Mike's behavior as a result got out of control. He did not adjust very well to his parents' conflicts. Sometimes, he even needed to lie to one parent in order to please the other. Meanwhile, he was in counseling regularly. Mike is only one example of many children of divorce, and there are millions of them in the United States. Although Mike's reactions to parents' divorce do not typify every child of divorce, some of his reactions are typical of other children of divorce. Some of the common reactions to parental divorce include anger, aggressiveness, depression, lowered self-esteem, fear and abandonment, stress, and guilt. Each of these reactions is discussed next.

Anger

Many children of divorce respond with intense anger toward their parental divorce, especially late elementary school-age children (e.g., Cherlin, 1995). According to Clapp (1992), 9-to-12-year-old children sense that parents could reconcile their differences if they honestly want to. Children at this

age then express their anger to their parents thereby indirectly blaming them for being selfish. Sometimes, children of divorce express their anger at school in the form of acting-out behaviors or verbal attacks (Spencer & Shapiro, 1993).

Aggressiveness

Several studies showed that children of divorce tend to be more aggressive and antisocial following their parents' separation and divorce (Hetherington, 1992; Kurtz, 1994a; Stevenson & Black, 1995). Even when their parents' divorce is not final, boys are more likely to be aggressive in conflict-ridden families (Cherlin, 1995). In Bandura's observational learning theory, children learn what they observe in real life, and model the behaviors they observe in the people around them (Bee, 1992). Needless to say, parents are always the first and most influential models for children. If the environment is conflict-ridden, children, especially boys, react aggressively to their parents' conflicts. Children of divorce are simply acting out what they have observed through parental hostility, aggressiveness, and impulsive behaviors. Furthermore, it is not a hard lesson for children to learn to react aggressively in a short time (Clapp, 1992).

Depression

Fendrich, Warner, and Weissman (1990) found that parental depression contributes to a high percentage of children depression than any other family risk factors. However, children who have depressed parents and also experience parental divorce are especially at high risk of depression. Several studies found that avoidance-coping appear among late-latency children, particularly girls. Evidence also showed that the behavior of avoidance causes high levels of depressive symptoms (Hamilton, 1993; Johnson, Campbell, & Mayes, 1985; Klierer, Irwin, & Sandler, 1993). Besides, Children depression is the major reason of lower academic achievement, school tardiness, and more health related problem (Hamilton, 1993).

Lowered Self-esteem

Several studies showed that parental divorce affects their children's self-esteem (e.g., Grych & Fincham, 1992). According to Spencer and Shapiro (1993), self-esteem is developed in early life of children through love and support. Indeed, the family is the original and most significant source for developing children's self-esteem. When children

experience parental divorce, the support and affirmation of the family diminish. Children of divorce may begin to feel insecurity and vulnerability, or even doubt about one's self-worth and value. Thus, divorce and its process may adversely affect the self-esteem of children (Spencer & Shapiro, 1993).

Fear and Abandonment

Spencer and Shapiro(1993) asserted that "a sense of the unknown further compounds the child's fear" (p.23). Many children of divorce believe that if the relationship between their parents can terminate, so can their relationships with their parents. Children become fearful of the uncertain future. They become uncertain about who will take care of them or feed them after divorce. Clapp (1992) indicated that early latency children are afraid of being abandoned by their parents and being replaced by new step siblings. Regardless of whether the fear is real or imagined, children begin to believe that their parents have abandoned them after their marriage has dissolved (Berner, 1992).

Stress

It is easy for children to cope with one stress and then bounce back to normal life. When children must cope with more

than one stress, the chances of behavior problems and serious symptoms increase (Thiessen, 1993). Children of divorce usually experience a series of stressful events, such as parental conflicts, new lifestyle, and parent-child relationships. All these changes are stresses to which children must adapt (Gardner, 1992; Sandler, Tein, & West, 1994). Therefore, few children of divorce can escape from severe psychological stress (Klosinski, 1993).

Guilt

Spencer and Shapiro (1993) indicated that most children of divorce wish to have a good relationship with both parents. However, parents are more likely to play side-taking game with their children. Side-taking activity makes children suffer in divided loyalties. When children form an alliance with one parent and turn against the other, they feel either powerful or helpless to the roles they play. No matter what positions they are in, many children of divorce grow up with feelings of guilt (Clapp, 1992; Klosinski, 1993). Besides, latency-age children also experience guilt and self-blame when they believe that they are somehow responsible for their parents' divorce (Kalter, 1990; Kurtz, 1994a).

The Consequences of Divorce on Children

Several studies suggested that most children will experience short-term affects following their parental divorce, and 85 percent of them recover about a year later (e.g., Carlile, 1991; Garvin, Leber, & Kalter, 1991). However, there are at least 30 percent of children of divorce who suffer long-term psychological difficulties (Kurtz, 1994a). For example Behrman and Quinn (1994) reported that children of divorce have elevated risks for various symptoms, such as psychological maladjustment, behavior and social problems, and lowered academic achievement. Specifically there are six consequences of divorce for children. These consequences are discussed next.

Parental Conflict

Parental conflict often brings negative consequences to their children, especially when parents fight for their children's alliance. In fact, most children want to be loyal to both parents. Parents who ask children to take sides in their conflicts only increase the difficulties for their children to adjust to the divorce (Cherlin, 1995; Clapp, 1992). Besides, several studies found that parental conflict is one of

the most negative consequences. It results in long-term problems for their children, since the parents frequently fight in front of their children (Gelernter, 1996; Wallerstein, 1991).

Adjustment Problems

Hall, Beougher, and Wasinger (1991) indicated that individual, family, and environment are the most important factors for children's adjustment after parental divorce. Although locus of control belief may mediate the relations between negative divorce events and children's adjustment problems in children's perspectives, most children show less internal locus of control and most of these negative divorce events are still beyond children's control (Butler et al., 1995; Fogas et al., 1992). In general, boys' adjustment to divorce is slower than girls, and boys also have more adjustment problems in the process of divorce (Clapp, 1992).

Single Mother & The Absence of Father

At least ninety percent of single parents are mothers (Behrman & Quinn, 1994). Thirty-eight percent of children do not live with their biological fathers, and more than fifty percent of children will spend part of their childhood without

a father (Shapiro, Schrof, Tharp, & Friedman, 1995). Numerous studies demonstrated the importance of the presence of the biological fathers in their children's lives, particularly boys (e.g., Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1995; Shapiro et al., 1995). According to Freud's stage of psychosexual development, latency-stage children continuously develop the identification with same-sex parents (Bee, 1992). That explains why mothers show less effective parenting skills with their sons, whereas girls' relationships with single mothers are similar to mother-daughter relationships in intact families (Cherlin, 1995).

Step Family

Most step families consist of one biological mother, one step father and one child or more. When the single-mother household becomes a step family, children need to adapt to a new environment and people such as a new step father and step siblings, meeting new friends, and changing schools (Hall, Beougher, & Wasinger, 1991). Moreover, children need to deal with four adults in parenting roles if both biological parents remarry (Stevenson & Black, 1995). Several studies reported the influences of step families to age and gender differences.

For example, step fathers improve the behavior and well-being of early-latency age boys, while the presence of step fathers create more problems for girls. However, both late-latency age boys and girls experience more difficulties with the presence of step fathers (Amato, 1993; Cherlin, 1995; Hetherington, 1992).

Academic Performance

Academic achievement is one of the most direct and observable change in children of divorce. Numerous studies showed academic achievement deficits among children of divorce, including lowered grade-point average, lower scores on reading and mathematics tests, and deficits in scholastic motivation as compared to children from intact families (Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, & Sarlin, 1991; Stevenson & Black, 1995; Wentzel, 1991). In addition, Wentzel (1991) also found that academic achievement and social competence have positive relations. Children from maritally disrupted homes often show less social responsibilities, lower interpersonal trust, and poorer academic performance (Wentzel, 1991).

Economic Hardship

Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) found that 40 percent of

divorced women suffer financially because more than half their family income is lost, whereas divorced men enjoy an increase in their family income. In 1990, the family income of a single-mother home was \$13,100, whereas an intact family made triple that amount (\$41,300) (Ahlburg & DeVita, 1992).

Economic hardship forces almost 50 percent of single mothers with children live in poverty (Shapiro et al., 1995). Although child support is available for single parents, about half of single mothers are not awarded child support for various reasons (Behrman & Quinn, 1994). Therefore, single mothers have to work longer or move to unsafe neighborhood in order to release their economic pressures. The quality of child care and nutrition are decreased at the same time (Amato, 1993; Gelernter, 1996).

Summary & Conclusion

It is obvious that divorce is the most stressful and painful event for parents and children. More and more longitudinal studies found that long-term effects of divorce to children are more damaging than they originally thought (e.g., Clapp, 1992). When Mulholland et al. (1991) studied the academic performance of a sample of adolescents of divorce, they found that the

academic performance deficit in adolescents may originate as early as first grade. Spencer and Shapiro (1993) also reported that "two-thirds of all adolescent admissions to psychiatric hospitals are children of divorce" (p.22). As a result, some children of divorce still cannot function very well both physically and psychologically in their adult life. Children of divorce may develop a lot of long-term problems such as depression, unhappiness, poor learning, intense anger, sexual promiscuity, or delinquent behavior (Clapp, 1992). Problems will emerge gradually, and thus they can not be resolved right away. When these behavior problems appear among children of divorce in the classroom, teachers should help them cope with these problems. If those problems remain unsolved, children of divorce will face more challenges, especially when they reach puberty (Kurtz, 1994a).

Chapter 3

Teachers' Roles

Students today bring many problems into their classrooms. The most common problem that children bring into the classroom is their parents' divorce (Kim, 1994). Nearly one out of every five children come from single-parent families in the United States. One out of every three children experience difficulties following their parents' divorce (Garvin, Leber, & Kalter, 1991; Hall, Beougher, & Wasinger, 1991). Since the percentage of children of divorce in an American classroom is high, teachers must not assume that most students come from intact families. Teachers can help students cope with problems that they face outside of school. This chapter will focus on teachers' roles including identifying children of divorce, teachers' attitudes toward children of divorce, understanding gender & age differences among children of divorce, and teachers' basic and advanced supportive roles.

Identify Children of Divorce

Kim (1994) indicated "When teachers look at some of children's faces they can tell that they are the faces of children who come from dysfunctional homes with problems of

divorce and all kinds of abuse" (p.8). Of course students of divorce do not write their identity on their faces. Since teachers have more contact with these children, they will be more likely to identify any signs of troubles among their students, especially those who come from divorced families. Several studies showed that children of divorce exhibit many signs of disturbance at school. For example, children of divorce might either act out or withdraw in classroom. They appear to be more nonproductive, rigid, and passive when coping with the environment and themselves. They also exhibit more behavior problems (e.g., Behrman & Quinn, 1994; Kurtz, 1994b; Kim, 1994). Thus, it is teachers' responsibilities to identify children of divorce at the beginning of each school year by looking for the signs mentioned above, school records, or other information (Carlile, 1991).

Teachers' Attitudes

Society today still uses academic achievement as a measure of success or failure for students (Hamilton, 1993). However, most children of divorce show certain deficits in academic performance more or less following parental divorce (e.g., Mulholland et al., 1991). According to Grymes, Cramer, Lawler-

Prince, and Atwood (1993), teachers' different perceptions to students affect teachers' attitudes, and their attitudes in turn affect student outcomes. If teachers view their students only through academic performance, they may spontaneously treat students who have lower academic achievement as a failurer. The self-fulfilling prophecy results in students' poor performance by teachers' negative expectations (Hamilton, 1993). Therefore, teachers' attitudes and perceptions are important for students from non-traditional families. Bisnaire, Firestone, and Rynard (1990) indicated that children of divorce sometimes may appear to be distracted or occupied with family problems in the classroom. Besides, they are probably unable to finish assignments on time or keep themselves on task. Teachers need to be patient with them and to be flexible with the classroom rules, because teachers' attitudes toward children of divorce do affect their outcomes and performance in educational settings (Carlile, 1991; Grymes et al. 1993).

Understand Gender & Age Differences

Early elementary school children often believe that they caused their parental separation or divorce, and this

egocentric belief often impairs their self-esteem (Kalter, 1990). While youngsters blame themselves for parental divorce, older children, particularly girls take family burdens on their shoulders and become caretakers. Those burdens force older children to grow up faster, and to act like adults (Brodkin & Coleman, 1995; Kalter, 1990).

With respect to the relationship with teachers, girls are more likely to turn to teachers for empathy and attention (Hall, Beougher, & Wasinger, 1991), whereas boys usually get less support and sensitivity from teachers (Clapp, 1992). In a survey of students' attitudes about teachers' involvement, Kim (1994) found at least 50 percent of fifth graders did not feel comfortable telling their problems outside of the school to teachers, and only three percent of them "wanted" to tell their teachers. On the contrary, young elementary-school children want their teachers to know about their family problems and to provide them with extra emotional support (Frieman, 1993). Gender and age differences affect how boys and girls react to their parents' divorce. If teachers understand these differences, they can help their students adjust to their parents' divorce better.

Teachers' Basic Supportive Roles

When parents are busy coping with the trauma of divorce, teachers sometimes might be the only one there to help the children. According to surveys of teachers' attitudes, Kim (1994) found that most teachers think they can listen and encourage their students who come from divorced families. Young elementary-age children believe that they can adjust and study better in school if their teachers know and are aware of the situations in their families (Frieman, 1993). Frieman (1993) also indicated that listening to children of divorce helps teachers know how to support them; teachers will also have better understanding of what is going on in their students' lives. However, not every student feels comfortable in talking about their family problems with their teachers. According to Carlile (1991), children of divorce are not eager to share family situations, for they are afraid of being perceived as different. Besides, teachers who tend to be more traditional and strict also suppress the desire of students from sharing family problems (Kim, 1994). As a result, a sensitive and caring teacher is important for children of divorce. These children will feel that their teachers can be

available for them whenever they need them. A safe and nurturing classroom environment is therefore necessary to provide to make students of divorce feel comfortable and free (Carlile, 1991; Kim, 1994).

Teachers' Advanced Supportive Roles

In addition to listening and encouraging children of divorce, teachers certainly can do more for them. For example, in classroom settings, teachers can plan different activities to help children of divorce express their feelings. For younger children, their egocentric beliefs make them blame themselves for parental divorce. Teachers should help them know that it is not their fault. Teachers also can use hands-on materials, such as clay, puppets, paint, or crayons to encourage them to express their mixed feelings appropriately (Frieman, 1993). For older children, who may be hesitant to talk about family situations with teachers, the teachers need to let them know that they are not alone. According to Garvin, Leber, and Kalter (1991), most fourth- and fifth-grade children benefit from group participation in an eight-week preventive intervention program. If teachers are comfortable using similar resources, group participation will have a positive

impact on those children. In addition, teachers can use role-playing, fictional books, writing, and drawing to help children of divorce express themselves (Carlile, 1991).

Although some teachers are unwilling to spend extra time after school, several studies indicated that communication with parents is a necessary process to help teachers understand more about children of divorce and help parents know their children's situations in school as well (e.g., Brodtkin & Coleman, 1995; Hall, Beougher, & Wasinger, 1991). In addition to teacher-parent communication, home visits can also build strong relationships with parents and increase the self-esteem of children of divorce (Kim, 1994). Teachers can not solve the family problems or change children's family lives, even though they really get involved with the situations and serve as liaisons between children and parents. However, teachers' supportive roles do help children cope with parental divorce and have a hope in future (Frieman, 1993; Kim, 1994).

Chapter 4

Training Workshop for Teachers

The divorce trend is not on the decline in the United States. Teachers need to deal with so many students from broken homes in their classrooms five days a week. Sometimes teachers must assume the basic role of counselors (Kim, 1994). Therefore, teachers need to have sufficient knowledge about children of divorce. Teachers cannot ignore the problems that children of divorce bring to school any more. Meanwhile, schools should provide regular workshop or training at the beginning of each school year, so that teachers will be a better prepared and have better understanding of children of divorce (Carlile, 1991). In this chapter, a 7-hour workshop is developed for elementary school teachers that will help them understand more about children of divorce. The time and content of the workshop are flexible according to the goals, needs, or members of the group. The content of this workshop is presented next; the format and outlines of the workshop are listed in Appendix A.

Introduction

The purpose of this workshop is to help teachers understand

children of divorce, the roles they play when they deal with behavior problems of children of divorce, and some activities teachers can use in classroom. After the introduction, teachers will form several small groups with six members in each group. In the small groups, teachers will introduce themselves by telling their names, which school and grade they teach, the purpose of coming to this workshop, and what they expect to learn from it.

Presentation

Two teachers who specialize in the field of children of divorce will present two topics about children of divorce in the classroom and teachers' roles. The topic of the first presentation is related to children of divorce, such as behavior problems they bring to classroom, the symptoms they exhibit, and the effects on them. The second presentation is related to teacher's roles, such as the importance of the art of listening, a nurturing classroom, and other skills teachers should learn to help children of divorce.

Brainstorming

Each teacher in the group will share the common behavior problems which children of divorce might exhibit in the

classroom and how the teacher must deal with those problems. Each answer is written on a poster or the chalk board. Then one teacher stays in the original group explaining the result of the group discussion, while the other group members switch to another group listening to different viewpoints until they go through every groups. By this activity, each group will have a chance to learn different coping styles brainstormed by the other groups.

Question-Answer Session

Teachers will be allowed to ask questions they have about how to deal with children of divorce. Several experts leading the workshop will try to answer their questions. Other teachers also can share their experiences or viewpoints at the same time.

Video Watching

In this session, teachers will watch a video called No Fault Kids (Long, 1987). After viewing this videotape, each group will be asked to discuss what they have learned and relearned from it. Similar videotapes can be checked out from public libraries or video stores for use in teachers' classrooms.

Play Media

Several studies indicated that children often find it difficult to express their intense feelings verbally when experiencing parental divorce (e.g., Campbell, 1993; Parker, 1994). This session will teach teachers how to use play materials to help children of divorce express their feelings. In play, there is no fear of failure, and children of divorce enjoy the feeling of control which they are unable to have in reality (Wassermann, 1992). Several play materials are provided in different tables such as puppets, art supplies, games, sandtrays, action figures, and dolls and doll house (Parker, 1994). Each group can go to different tables to play with those materials and see how they can use play as a non-threatening way of dealing with children of divorce.

Role Playing

The final activity of the workshop is role playing. Each small group is into two groups with three members in each. First, each teacher begins by sharing one of the most unforgettable children of divorce they have ever met in their teaching career, and what makes that child so unforgettable. Then one teacher role plays the behaviors of that child, and

another teacher plays the role of the teacher to help this child cope with parental divorce. The third teacher gives feedback on how well the teacher handles the situation. After ten minutes, each teacher switches roles until all of them have had the opportunity to perform each role. After half an hour, each divided group returns to their original group and every member shares which role is easier/ more difficult and what they have learned. Then all small groups give feedback one another on what they have learned through the process of role playing.

Conclusion

At the end of the workshop, all teachers must complete a short evaluation form in which they rate the usefulness of the various components of this workshop. Group members also indicate which session they liked or benefited from the most and the topic they would like to have included in future workshops. Several resources such as book lists, board games, and videotapes will be made available in the workshop. These resources are listed in Appendix B.

Chapter 5

Conclusion & Implications

This research paper focused on the impact of divorce on children and the implications for teachers.

Adjustments For Parents

Marriage is not like a fairy tale that prince and princess always live happily ever after. Perhaps that is why people still rush into marriage without thinking about reality. Of course various unexpected problems emerge after marriage. Divorce becomes an instant method of resolving the marital conflicts. Needless to say, the family is an essential component of the elementary school children's psychosocial development (Kurtz & Derevensky, 1993). However, divorce impairs the function of the entire family. Parents must adjust to the divorce, a process that may take a couple of years (Booth & Amato, 1991). While parents are adjusting to their own divorce problems, the quality of childrening decreases. According to Amato (1993), children who lack access to parental resources are exposed to many unpleasant changes and are probably at high risk for developing problems.

Difficulties for Children

Mulholland et al. (1991) showed little evidence that children had immediate adjustment to their parents' divorce. Instead, the children's suffering is more of a long-term nature. According to Gill (1992), 22 percent of children from disrupted families had to repeat a grade in school and twice the number of these children had been expelled or suspended from school compared to children from non-disrupted families. Furthermore, Mulholland et al. (1991) found that the long-term academic outcomes occur early in the adjustment period. Although many adjustment problems to children are as a result of parental divorce, children usually exhibit those problems in classroom settings. If teachers are more aware of children of divorce as early as elementary school-age, the problems they develop may decrease in the future.

Implications for Teachers

Today's teachers deal with students from diverse backgrounds. Some teachers may not have the energy or interest to take care of children of divorce particularly. In education settings, students need to learn not only about math or science but also about social skills such as how to cope effectively

with problems. When students do not know how to cope with problems, some misbehavers may appear in classroom. Most teachers in public schools still use reactive discipline to handle misbehaviors (Ban, 1994). However, all behavior is purposeful. When children of divorce exhibit some misbehaviors, teachers need to be sensitive and find the reasons behind those behaviors instead of punishing them directly. Moreover, teachers need to use proactive discipline to prevent misbehaviors of children of divorce from occurring. Teachers also need to plan different instructional activities and play media in order to meet the needs of children of divorce. At elementary school age, children are likely to look up to their teachers as role models. If teachers can provide a warm and an inviting atmosphere for children of divorce, they will approach their teachers about their problems without any fear. Eventually teachers can make an impact on the lives of these children.

Recommendations for Future Study

From chapter 1 to chapter 2, there are numerous studies available. Most studies focus on what parents and counselors should do for children of divorce. There are also other

studies that focus on the impact of divorce on children. Most researchers pay little attention to teachers' roles although teachers have more contact with these students. Future studies can focus more on teachers' roles of identifying trouble signs among children of divorce, how to deal with their negative reactions, and how to help them react more effectively to their parents' divorce.

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Appendix A

Time Frame & Outlines for Workshop

Introduction	20 minutes	9:00-9:20
Presentation	30 minutes	9:20-9:50
Brainstorming	50 minutes	9:50-10:40
Question-Answer	60 minutes	10:40-11:40
Lunch Time	50 minutes	11:40-12:30
Video Watching	60 minutes	12:30-13:30
Play Media	60 minutes	13:30-14:30
Role Playing	60 minutes	14:30-15:30
Conclusion	30 minutes	15:30-16:00

Appendix B

ResourcesBooks for Young Children (Ages 5-8)

Boegehold, B. (1985). Daddy doesn't live here anymore.

Racine, WI: Western.

Danziger, P. (1995). Amber Brown goes fourth. New York:

G.P. Putnam's.

Harding, J. (1980). My divorce coloring. Boulder, CO:

Childcare Press.

Helmering, D. W. (1981). I have two families. Nashville:

Abingolon.

Ives, S. Fassler, D., & Lash, M. (1985). The divorce

workbook. Burlington, VT: Waterfront Books.

Magid, K., & Schreibman, W. (1980). Divorce is... A kid's

coloring book. Gretna, LA: Pelican.

Mayle, P., & Robins, A. (1980). Divorce can happen to the

niciest people. New York: MacMillan.

Weninger, B. (1995). Good-bye, daddy. New York: North-

South Books.

Rogers, F. (1996). Let's talk about it: Divorce. New York:

G.P. Putnam's.

Super, G. (1991). What is a family? Frederick, MD: Twenty-First Century Books.

Books for Older Children (Ages 8-12)

Berry, J. W. (1991). Good answer to tough questions about divorce. Chicago: Children's Press.

Boeckman, C. (1980). Surviving your parents' divorce. New York: franklin Watts.

Bradley, B. (1982). Where do I belong?: A kid's guide to step families. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Christopher, M. (1996). The comeback challenge. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.

Cleary, B. (1983). Dear Mr. Henshaw. New York: Morrow.

Duffey, B. (1994). Coaster. New York: Viking.

Giff, P. R. (1984). Rat teeth. New York: Delacorte Press.

Gilbert, S. (1982). How to live with a single parent. New York: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

Hurwitz, J. (1984). DeDe takes charge. New York: Morrow.

Irwin, H. (1980). Bring to a boil and separates. New York: Atheneum.

Mazer, N. F. (1991). E, my name is Emily. New York: Scholastic.

Moore, E. (1980). Something to count on. New York: Dutton.

Naylor, P. R. (1995). Being Danny's dog. New York:

Atheneum.

Park, B. (1981). Don't make me smile. New York: Knopf.

Robison, L. (1996). Gateway. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co.

Seuling, B. (1985). What kind of family is this? Racine,

WI: Western.

Van, L. J. (1996). Blue sky, butterfly. New York: Dial

Books for Young Readers.

Wilson, N. H. (1994). The reason for Janey. New York:

Macmillan.

Books for Young & Old Children

Birdseye, T. (1990). Tucker. New York: Holiday House.

Cleary, B. (1991). Strider. New York: Morrow Junior Books.

Hogan, R. Z. (1980). Will dad ever move back home?

Milwaukee: Raintree Children Books.

Krementz, J. (1984). How it feels when parents divorce.

New York: Knopf.

Smith, R. K. (1990). The squeaky wheel. New York: Dell.

Board Games

Berg, B. (1982). The changing family game. Dayton, OH:

Cognitive-Behavioral Resources.

Gardner, R. A. (1973). The talking, feeling, and doing game. Gresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics.

Shapiro, L. (1992). My two homes. King of Prussia, PA: Center for Applied Psychology, Inc.

Theodore, G. (1991). The divorce game. Salt Lake City, UT: Theodore Games.

Videotapes

Long, K. (1987). No fault kids. Center for Children of Divorce.

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