

Educating Young Adults of the Effects of Divorce on Children

Delta State University

Educating Young Adults of the Effects of Divorce on Children

~~Literature Review~~

Throughout the United States, an average of 40% to 50% of marriages end in divorce (Altmaier & Maloney, 2007). Couples experience much financial and emotional stress, but there is another group affected by divorce: the children. Divorce is a life-altering event that affects many people, not just the couple. Children are forced to endure a life-choice they did not make, and as a result, experience the consequences of that decision (Anthony, DiPerna, & Amato, 2014). Children of divorce deserve the opportunity to have a successful future no matter their past.

Anthony, DiPerna, and Amato (2014) evaluated data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study on the 1998-1999-kindergarten class to determine if divorce affects children in their classroom endeavors. Their study was performed at Pennsylvania State University and considered the children's age, gender, and other psychological characteristics in relation to the cause or timeframe of divorce. There were 21,409 students considered for the testing, however, only 10,639 participated. Ratios of students were from various locations, including 20.6% from the northeast, 28.4% from the northwest, 29.4% from the south, and 21.6% from the west. Multiple race or ethnicities were included as well: 72% White, 6.3% African American, 11.6% Hispanic, 5.8% Asian, and 4.3% other. Of these students, 71.8% of them were public school students and 28.2% of them were private school students. Most of these students were from a mid-size, suburban city (43%), though large city students (35.9%) and small town students (21.1%) were also included. Not all students in this survey experienced divorce. In fact, 90.7% did not experience a parental divorce. However, 3.5% experienced divorce between ages 5 and

6, 3.8% experienced divorce between ages 7 and 8, and 2% experienced divorce between ages 9 and 11 (Anthony, DiPerna, & Amato, 2014).

The research was conducted through math and reading tests given to each of these students at the same time over the course of their kindergarten through eighth grade school years. Interviews were also conducted between the children's teachers and parents to aid in further evaluation of the child. It was concluded that children who endure divorce at home do have the potential to struggle academically, especially older girls and younger children. Factors such as moving homes, parent fighting, or parents in new relationships are a few of many issues to be considered by teachers when a child is going through a parental divorce. It was also discovered that the age, sex, and time of divorce are important factors for understanding the child's cognitive and emotional development (Anthony, DiPerna, & Amato, 2014).

Kim (2011) also conducted a study on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the 1998-1999-kindergarten class that considered parent's marital problems before divorce and the possibility for resilience up to two years after divorce. Kim (2011) issued seven surveys during these students' fall and spring semesters of kindergarten, the fall and spring of first grade, and the spring of 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade. Children whose parents divorced between the spring of their 1st grade year and the spring of their 3rd grade year were examined for this study. The findings show that children's math and reading test scores were lower during and after divorce. Children's social skills are affected during and after divorce as well. However, this study found that there were no changes in children's reading scores during any stage test. It is predicted that the exhibition or internalization of a child's negative behavior problems is in fact related to divorce (Kim, 2011).

Weaver and Schofield (2014) organized a series of tests to find out if children from ages 5 to 15 years old who experienced divorce had behavioral problems because of divorce, or if their behavior was related to other life circumstances. These children were compared to children with married, biological parents. The study focuses on four areas that could potentially help aid or hurt the divorce situation: the mother's depression and relationship with the child, the family income, and the condition of the family's home. There were three main hypothesis' determined before the study took place. The first was the thought that children who experience divorce would have more behavior problems than those who did not. The second was that children who had positive influences in their life would experience the fewer negative effects of divorce. The final hypothesis was that the children who had parents that were invested in the child's well being during the divorce would experience fewer negative effects of divorce. The participants of the study were retrieved from a variety of United States hospitals in 1991. There were 1,364 mothers who participated in an interview exactly one month after the child had been taken home from the hospital. The conductors made frequent visits to analyze the children at 1, 3, 9, 12, and 15 months, 2 through 5 years old, 1st through 7th grade, and at ages 14 and 15 years. They also would ask questions in regards to the parent's relationship status. Ultimately, they concluded that children who are products of divorce do have more behavior issues than those who have married parents. They also found that positive influences, such as a good relationship with parent or a child's high IQ, was related to a healthier experience during the divorce than those who did not have those attributes (Weaver & Schofield, 2014).

Another problem of children experiencing divorce is accommodating living arrangements. Cancian et al. (2014) conducted a study using Wisconsin Court Records through 2008 to determine which parents get custody, and the effects custody arrangements can have on

the children and today's social norms. It was found that 81.7% of moms received full custody, while 18.3% of dads received full custody. However, shared custody has grown since the 1980's-1990's. The conclusion to this study found that mother's full custody rates had dropped increasingly, father's full custody rates remained fairly secure, and shared custody rates rose. This study only looks at one state within the United States, so it could be different elsewhere (Cancian et al., 2014).

Evidence thus far has confirmed that divorce affects children in various ways. Parental duties are placed on the backburner at times during divorce, because their focus fails to be on the children, resulting in the child's behavioral problems. However, this lack of parenting is not necessarily done on purpose. A study administered on a Mindful Parenting Program educated 12 divorced parents on recognizing moments when they may fail to use practical parenting techniques and were taught effective parenting tools to use in their homes. The main goals of this study were to test the program's legitimacy and to find the positive and negative attributes to the program and adjust for future use. Before the study was performed, the material was reviewed, a psychologist was hired to attend the sessions, and the conductors of the experiment arranged for each session to be videoed (Altmaier & Maloney, 2007).

There were originally 281 letters mailed to potential participants. Of that number, 42 responded, 16 were interviewed, 14 agreed to participate, but 12 actually participated. All members of the test were of white race and 83% were women. These parents were between the ages of 24 and 47 years old, had been married between 0.5 and 21 years, and had at least one child between 3 and 6 years old. These parents had a variety of educational background including: high school diploma (41.7%), Associates degree (25%), Bachelor's degree (25%), and other Advanced degrees (8.3%). Many were full-time workers (66.7%) while the rest worked

part-time or were unemployed (33.3%). The household income of the parents was also investigated with 8.3% averaging between \$0 and \$10,000; 25% averaging between \$10,000 and \$20,000; 33.3% averaging between \$20,000 and \$30,000; 25% averaging between \$30,000 and \$40,000; and 8.3% averaging between \$40,000 and \$50,000. The final element considered in the study was the amount of time passed since the divorce: 25% said it had been 6 to 11 months, 41.7% reported 12 to 17 months, 8.3% reported 18 to 23 months, and 25% reported 24 or more months. The seminars were held at a local healthcare center in Iowa and occurred for a series of twelve weeks with a total of fifteen hours of curriculum taught. After each seminar, the parents were asked to complete a survey discussing what they learned that day. The experimenters reviewed each session thoroughly after the meetings as well. The study revealed that this educational program did expand parent's awareness of their opportunities for better parenting. However, it did not aid in the overall relationship of the child and parent (Altmaier & Maloney, 2007).

Considering the desired age group to be educated on the effects of divorce on children, the study conducted by Cui & Fincham (2010) holds important information to be considered. Children of divorce can have issues later in life with their own romantic relationships. In this study, the social learning theory is considered because children can model their parent's actions in reference to romantic relationships. This study was conducted within an undergraduate class at Florida State University. There were originally 995 students, however, for the purposes of this study, only 467 were eligible to be in the study. Of the 467 students left, 182 students changed partners over the course of the study. The remaining 285 students who met the requirements and held the same relationship over the course of the study were used to state the overall results of the study. Within these 285 students, 206 students' parents were not divorced and 79 students'

parents were divorced. There were 249 females and 36 males, all averaging of about 19 years old and of non-Hispanic White race (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

Students were asked at the beginning of the semester, 7 weeks later, and again 14 weeks later about their parent's relationship, their relationships, and their thoughts on their significant other. It was hypothesized that those students whose parents were divorced would have overall negative thoughts towards marriage, resulting in less of a desire to commit to a relationship, which would ultimately confirm that the parental divorce and marital conflict aided in the child's overall romantic relationship enjoyment and desire to commit. The hypotheses were proven to be accurate according to this study; however, it is to be noted that the demographic factors aided to the overall results of the study. Further studies completed in a different location with a wider variety of gender and ethnicities would also be helpful to the further study of the effects of parental divorce on the child's romantic relationships (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

Methodology

According to the previous review of literature, it is found that multiple child behavioral and emotional problems are caused by parental divorce. This causation of divorce is a growing epidemic that has had multiple studies conducted, but very few of these studies were a means of educating people of these effects. However, the studies that did the exploratory and descriptive research on educating people on the effects of divorce on children had positive results. This study will seek to research educating young adults on the effects of divorce on children. The goal of this study is to discover if educating the young adults of the effects of divorce on children will improve their understanding of the effects of divorce on children. It is hypothesized that educating young adults of the effects of divorce on children will result in the improvement of their understanding of these effects. Within the study, the independent variable is educating the

paradise

*goal
or
hypothesis*

hypotheses

IV

young adults, while the dependent variable is each of the young adult's current knowledge during the study. The Delta State institutional review board has approved this pre experimental study to take place in the spring semester of 2016.

This pre experimental study will examine a cohort of college students with a pretest, intervention, and posttest method. These students will consist of 17-23 year old males and females, as well as a small percentage of nontraditional male and female students. These

students will be of multiple races, including White, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and others. Another demographic variable will be student relationship statuses, varying from: single, in a relationship, married, and others. These students also could come from families that have parents that are separated, legally divorced, married, and so on. To gain a large external validity, the researcher will contact Kappa Delta sorority's president via email to speak with the members of Kappa Delta sorority at their weekly Sunday meetings. If in compliance, they will issue out fliers and will encourage classmates and friends to attend this event. The researcher will also address in her meeting with Kappa Delta sorority the need for snacks, drinks, and workers for the event. Prior to this meeting, the researcher will seek the approval from the president of Kappa Delta sorority to allow its members philanthropic points for aiding the success of this event study. The researcher will also contact the secretary of President LaForge via email to negotiate setting up a Fireside Chat with the president and the researcher at the beginning of spring semester, in order to encourage attendance as well. These people will be notified and confirmed of participation by the researcher in the fall of 2015 in order to allot time to prepare the materials to be passed out by Kappa Delta sorority members and words to be presented during the presidential Fireside Chat.

IV

When

Cohey & /
Sample /
Population

Demographic
- age
- race
- characteristics

Design -
time
period
of research
instrument

Other methods of increasing attendance will be advertizing the distribution of door prizes. One door prize will be a fifty-dollar gift certificate to Bellazar's restaurant in Boyle, MS. The researcher will contact the owner, John Nassar, over the telephone to ask for the donation as a favor for the researcher, who has worked for him for a while. The researcher will also contact Chrisa Mansell at Delta Dairy in Cleveland, Mississippi to ask for a gift certificate donation of their choice for this event. The researcher will also go to the Delta State bookstore and Union to ask for door prize donations for the event. There are a few extraneous variables that could prevent a large external validity. If students have a class, work, or other prior engagement during the intervention, the external validity could be affected. To aid the maximum amount of attendance, the researcher will consult with the Delta State University calendar on their website before setting an official date of intervention. However, the researcher has no control over work schedules or other prior engagements or emergencies. Another extraneous variable would be the weather. Weather is an unpredictable factor that could potentially make commuting to the event unlikely.

The educational event will take place in the Jacob Conference Center in Ewing Hall. The researcher will contact Wayne Blansett and Moses Bailey in order to schedule the center in an appropriate, timely manner. As previously stated, the instrument gathering the data for this study will be a pretest and posttest that will be provided by the researcher. The researcher will also provide a separate demographic survey to further analyze the cohort. The researcher will have the pretest available to the students at a series of tables outside the conference center thirty to forty-five minutes prior to the beginning of the event. Kappa Delta sorority members, as well as other volunteers, will monitor these tables. Once the students have filled out the pretest, they

*Other methods
- Survey
- Interview*

*oppose
Physical
research
design
place/
writing
Instrument
participants*

will enter the conference center to find various tables with refreshments and tickets for a door prize.

When the time for the meeting begins, the researcher will come to the stage to introduce the speaker. Paul R. Amato of Pennsylvania State University will speak aided by a power-point presentation on the effects of divorce on children. Amato has conducted various studies on multiple factors of divorce and their effects on children, as well as studies of the ages of children experiencing divorce and the behavioral problems of these children. The researcher will email to seek Amato's attendance to the event via email and phone call. After Amato's presentation, the researcher will announce the posttest that will be distributed to the students in their seats by the volunteers. Once the students have completed their posttest and returned it to a volunteer, the researcher will announce door prizes. After door prizes, the students will be free to leave the event. The volunteers of the event will assist in stacking chairs, collecting garbage, and returning all posttests to the researcher.

PreTest

1. Have your biological parents experienced a legal divorce?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. no, but they are currently separated
2. Do you know someone (friend or family member) who has experienced a legal divorce?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. no, but they are currently separated
3. Based on the provided answers below, how would you best describe marriage?
 - a. A waste of time
 - b. A complicated legal agreement
 - c. A working progress
 - d. A romantic adventure
4. Having a college degree reduces the likelihood of a person experiencing a legal divorce.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Developing resilience is easy after your parent's divorce.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Academic achievement is linked to a child's life at home.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Post Test

1. Have your biological parents experienced a legal divorce?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. no, but they are currently separated
2. Do you know someone (friend or family member) who has experienced a legal divorce?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. no, but they are currently separated
3. Based on the provided answers below, how would you best describe marriage?
 - a. A waste of time
 - b. A complicated legal agreement
 - c. A working progress
 - d. A romantic adventure
4. Having a college degree reduces the likelihood of a person experiencing a legal divorce.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Developing resilience is easy after your parent's divorce.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Academic achievement is linked to a child's life at home.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. Did this educational workshop improve your understanding of the effects of divorce on children?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Demographic Survey

The following information is strictly used for the purposes of gathering information for this study. Please circle or write out the desired information. Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

Current age: (please write)

Age at parent's separation:

Race or Ethnicity: (please circle)

White/Caucasian African American Hispanic Latino Other

Gender:

Male Female

Conclusion

The review of literature revealed that children who experience parental divorce have various effects on their mental, social, and educational well-being. This study sought to educate young adults on the effects of divorce on children in order to improve their understanding of these effects. The results of this study found that educating young adults of these effects did improve their understanding and gave these students adequate knowledge in regards to divorce. A total of sixty students attended this event and completed the pre test, intervention session, posttest, and demographic survey instruments of the research. There were 25% male, 75% female attendees, varying from White/Caucasian (45%), African-American (25%), Hispanic (15%), and Chinese (15%) ethnicity. Since this study was successful, the researcher has arranged with President LaForge to hold this study on an annual basis.

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