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HOW K-3 CLASSROOM TEACHERS ARE DEALING WITH PUPILS COMING FROM  
ONE-PARENT HOMES DUE TO SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

by  
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A Thesis submitted to the Department of Elementary  
Education in partial fulfillment of the Requirements  
for The Degree of Master of Education

Committee Members:

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Abstract

Kindergarten through third grade classroom teachers need professional training on how to assist pupils coming from one-parent homes due to separation or divorce. The methods that are employed by kindergarten, first, second, and third grade classroom teachers were surveyed using a questionnaire specifically designed for the study.

The results of the questionnaire were presented in tables, using the raw scores. The study concludes that teachers are willing to assist pupils in this trying situation, but they feel inadequate to do so. Kindergarten through third grade teachers feel there is a need for professional training to help them be more effective in working with pupils experiencing personal problems.

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### How K-3 Classroom Teachers Are Dealing With Pupils Coming From One-Parent Homes Due to Separation or Divorce

A decade ago, the two-parent family was the American norm. Today, a growing percentage of America's children are in families with only one parent (Clay, 1980). More than 64% of those divorcing have children, and as of the 1974 United States Census Bureau report, one out of six children under 18 lives in a single parent home (Kessler & Bostwick, 1974).

As family life styles change, the American school system needs to change to meet not only the educational needs of its students, but the emotional needs as well. A teacher should not assume that all pupils live in a happy home with two parents (Clay, 1980).

If a teacher wants to help a child reach his fullest potential, then he or she needs to teach the whole child. When a child is having family difficulties at home, these difficulties will influence his or her academic achievement in school. The parent and teacher need to keep an open and honest relationship to work cooperatively for the best interest of the child. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to understand how they can assist their pupils who are confronted with problems resulting from changes in their homes.

Problem Statement

With an increase of children coming from one-parent homes, due to separation or divorce, how do teachers deal with the situation? Specifically, it is the intent of this study to determine how kindergarten through third grade classroom teachers attempt to assist pupils who are living in one-parent homes due to separation or divorce.

Rationale

A study conducted by Johnson (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979) shows that, based upon current trends, estimates indicate that before the turn of the century more than half of all Americans will have been directly touched by a divorce. Within the past 10 years the number of divorces per year has more than doubled, to over 1,000,000 in 1975, and the number of children involved has increased even faster than the divorce rate. There is an ever-increasing number of children who now, or will in the future, spend some time before their 18th birthday living with only one parent (Brassard & Burns, 1982). Glick (cited in Burns & Brassard, 1982) predicts that by 1990, 50% of all children, as opposed to 27% in 1960 and 37% in 1980, will reside in such a family. Bumpass and Rindfuss (cited in Burns & Brassard, 1982) report that estimates for black children

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range as high as 75%, and the average length of time spent by a child in a single parent family is 4½ years; however, for many children the experience lasts much longer. As of this time there are no nation-wide statistics available on just primary age children.

Brassard and Burns (1982) state that children who are reared in single parent homes have an increased risk for psychological damage and poor academic achievement. Shinn (cited by Brassard & Burns, 1982) states that compared to intact families, children from single parent families score lower on measures of school performance and on standardized tests of intelligence and achievement.

Children from divorced families are generally thought to have their various needs less often met (Parish cited in Parish & Phillip, 1982). These children also manifest lower self-concepts (Parish & Dostal, Parish & Taylor, Young & Parish, cited in Parish & Phillip, 1982) than children from intact families. Some studies (Martinek & Johnson, cited in Parish & Phillip, 1982) have demonstrated that children's self-concepts can be enhanced in school settings if their teachers will endeavor to be more accepting, encouraging and interactive with them.

Teachers are in a position to assist students with personal problems which result from their living in one-

parent homes due to separation or divorce. Because these problems influence a student's academic progress and socialization process, they need to be addressed by the teacher. It appears that classroom teachers want to help children cope with their problems, but often do not know how to respond.

As separation and divorce continue to increase in the United States, it is necessary for schools to develop ways of helping children cope with disruptions in their family life (Cook & McBride, 1982). Effron states, "The school environment is a natural setting in which young people experiencing loss can begin to share responses and develop ways of coping with this crisis in their lives" (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982, p. 93).

With current statistics showing an increase in the separation and divorce rate and a rise in the children coming from one-parent homes, it is necessary for educators to become aware of those children's needs. This project will take a look at what k-3 classroom teachers are doing to assist their pupils through this stressful situation and what improvements, if any, need to be made.

Definition of Terms

Bibliotherapy

The reading of books for therapeutic purposes  
(Thorndike Barnhart, 1970).



Chapter II

Review of Literature

The Effects of Separation and Divorce On Children

Professionals such as teachers, judges, lawyers, clergymen, and behavior scientists who come in contact with children from one-parent homes created by separation or divorce find this has a profound negative impact upon children. Wellerstein and Kelly (1975), report that nearly half of the sample of "normal" preschool children whom they studied (all of whom had received the benefit of at least a brief counseling intervention) deteriorated in functioning (intellectually, physically, and mentally) in the year following parental separation. With slightly older children, they report that nearly half evidenced "troubled and conflicted depressive behavior patterns" Wallerstein and Kelly (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979, p. 156). According to McDermott, Tseng, Char, and Fukunaga (cited by Benedek & Benedek, 1979, p. 156), "Divorce may be the single largest cause of childhood depression." Studies suggest a higher incidence of delinquency and antisocial behavior among children of divorce than among those of intact households McDermott (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979). In reviewing the records of children referred for outpatient evaluation at a children's psychiatric

hospital, Kalter (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979) has noted that children of divorce appeared at nearly twice the rate of occurrence than children from the general population.

Children tend to react to separation and divorce in many different ways. Thus, parents and professionals should not expect all children to react in the same way. Each child will respond according to his or her unique personality, available support systems, and developmental level Anthony, Hetherington, Cox, & Cox (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982).

The child may be shocked when first told of the separation or divorce, but he or she may accept the news without comment or even appear unaffected. During the process of a divorce, some children may display frequent crying. This crying is due to the grief the child is going through over the divorce.

It is not uncommon for preschool children facing a difficult situation to regress in their development. This regression is demonstrated by thumb sucking, bed wetting, excessive whining and clinging behavior, and regression of speech to a less competent baby talk type of speech. Grollman (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982) suggests that this regression

may be a child's way of saying, "Don't leave me. See, I am only a little child. Please love me and stay with me" (p. 90). Also, due to the separation or divorce, various kinds of physiological reactions may occur. Some of the physiological disturbances include trembling, restlessness, loss of appetite, increased pulse rate, nausea, diarrhea, stomachache, frequent urination, and distressing dreams (Cook & McBride, 1982).

During the time of separation or divorce children will have many fears. One of the most powerful fears is that the child will be deserted and abandoned by one or both parents Grollman (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982). Their reasoning is that because their parents stopped loving each other, they will stop loving them as well. According to Turrow (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982) fears of being abandoned create in the child feelings of rejection and consequently a sense of being unloved and hence unlovable.

A second fear children often face is their belief that they are the cause of the separation or divorce. Children tend to feel guilty about the divorce because, in their experience, most of the bad things that happen to them occur because they are guilty (Cook & McBride, 1982). Grollman (cited in Cook & McBride, 1982) believes

that to a child's way of thinking, divorce must be re-tribution for wrong doings.

#### Children's Adjustment to Separation or Divorce

Each child is different and each case of circumstances is different. According to Parks (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979) children typically require from 1 to 3 years, and in some instances, as long as 8 years to adjust to the separation or divorce. There have been some cases where the child never learns to adjust to the separation or divorce.

#### The Need For Separation And Divorce Education

Teachers and school personnel need to realize and accept the fact that not all children have two parents in the home. Clay (1980) states that according to census bureau projections, nearly half of all children born in 1979 will be spending a significant portion of their childhood with only one parent.

For teachers to be able to deal with the situation of one-parent homes adequately, they need to have training. Understandably, not all teachers are able to function in settings where open expression of feelings and emotions is encouraged as would be the case in educating students about divorce. It is not expected of the teacher to be a

skilled therapist. However, according to Benediet and Benediek (cited in Benedek & Benedek, 1979) empathic skills can be taught and with appropriate training, many teachers can handle the subject of separation and divorce.

Brassard and Burns (1982) have cited suggestions by Drake (1979) for developing a program for school personnel. The objectives of the program would be to: (a) provide factual information regarding the effects of separation and divorce on children, and (b) involve the participants in activities to plan interventions for the children. The four-part program includes typical and atypical effects of separation and divorce on children. Part one covers behaviors manifested in school. The second part contains factors affecting the degree of trauma experienced. The third part demonstrates methods of determining which children need help through the separation and divorce process. The last part of the program concludes with curriculum adaptations that could be employed in the classroom by the teacher.

Classroom settings could provide a form of primary prevention for pupils who might later experience family conflict as children, or even later as parents. Also,

the classroom could provide therapeutic value for those who already come from single-parent homes.

Strategies and Techniques For Classroom Teachers

Teachers play a significant role in a young person's life in terms of both time and preparation received for adulthood. Educational institutions should be interested and involved in providing developmental assistance to individuals faced with critical life situations such as the separation or divorce of one's parents. As of now, there are few, if any, published strategies on the manner in which elementary schools (the teachers) can provide some specific assistance to the child involved in separation and divorce Wilkinson and Bleck (cited in Green, 1978). However, the literature does suggest general guidelines which are helpful to elementary school teachers.

One of the first things schools can do to help children adjust is to educate them about the situation. Educate both the parent and child about the enormous social, financial, and emotional consequences of divorce (Benedek & Benedek, 1979). The classroom teacher could provide divorce-oriented education to all of his or her students. This would allow the students to ask questions and learn about the situation before it happens to their family.

Innovative techniques need to be employed by the teacher for an effective program. One workshop for children of divorce, for example, has used role playing and stimulus films (Kessler & Bostwick, 1977). A variety of audiotapes, videotapes, movies, and playlets aimed at various age groups is currently available. Books designed for adolescents (e. g., Gardner, 1970) and even for very young children (e. g., Cain & Benedek, 1976) can be used by the classroom teacher for therapeutic purposes. This bibliotherapy is an easy and effective way for teachers to assist children.

If the classroom teacher has exerted all of his or her efforts to help the child adjust and the child is still having difficulties, then the teacher needs to look to a new source for help. The next source of help may come from the guidance counselor.

#### The School Guidance Counselor

Some elementary schools have a group therapy session for children coming from one-parent homes. These therapy sessions are conducted by the guidance counselor. The only requirement for group membership should be that the child's parents are separated or divorced (Sonnenshein-Schneider & Baird, 1980). Sonnenshein-Schneider and Baird (1980) agree

with Sonstegard and Dreikurs (1973) that group membership should be open to all children of one-parent homes due to separation or divorce and that group membership should not involve intensive psychological screening. The divorce group should serve a preventive as well as a remedial function (Sonnenshein-Schneider & Baird, 1980).

During these group sessions, many personal family stories will be told. Each time the story is told it is stripped of its tragic power. The affective response from the group is that the event was not that terrible. At this time the child becomes surrounded by peers who effectively validate that bad experiences are survivable. In the early years this peer validation is a developmental essential and holds much more therapeutic impact than confirmation from an adult counselor alone (Sonnenshein-Schneider & Baird, 1980).

The length of a group therapy session should last 15 to 20 minutes for primary age children. Group therapy can be conducted in many ways but the goals are basically the same. Some of the basic goals of group therapy, as described by Wilkinson and Bleck (1977, p. 207), are:

1. To clarify the child's feelings about the divorce.




2. To help the child understand that others are experiencing similar feelings.
3. To help children gain a realistic picture of the divorce situation.
4. To assist the child in learning new ways of coping with feelings associated with divorce.

These goals are the same as those stated by Dinkmeyer and Caldwell (1970) for developmental group counseling.

Barbara Green (1978) believes that the multimodal approach to helping children of divorce offers a comprehensive and integrated method of counseling. The multimodal approach deals with the following modes: health, emotions, learning/school, people/personal relationships, image, need-to-know, and guidance of actions, behaviors, and consequences. Green (1978, p. 34) has described the objectives for multimodal divorce groups:

1. To facilitate interaction and support among children sharing the experience of divorce.
2. To acquaint children with the realistic facts regarding divorce.
3. To help children clarify, recognize, and understand feelings and emotions pertaining to divorce.

4. To help children learn how to confront and cope with problems specific to divorce.
5. To help children deal with personal relationships: friends and family.
6. To help children develop positive self-images and broaden their range of interests.
7. To help children develop rational, correct thoughts regarding themselves and divorce.
8. To help children change existing negative behavior patterns to more positive ways of acting.

There are various techniques that can be used to accomplish these goals. Some of the techniques which are used by the guidance counselor are: brainstorming, role playing, role rehearsal, bibliotherapy, slides-tapes,  movies, puppets, and drawings (Sonnenshein-Schneider & Baird, 1980). After the classroom teacher has been trained, he or she can also use these techniques.

School counselors and classroom teachers may choose to use the technique of bibliotherapy when working with children individually or in groups. There are many books which have been written for school-age children who are living in single-parent families (Burns & Brassard, 1982).

Family Involvement

Many times group therapy with a guidance counselor is not enough and it is necessary to get the family involved in counseling. Due to the impact of the home environment on a child's school performance, some school districts have begun to expand their educational and mental health needs. One example is the Jordan Family Education Center in Salt Lake City, Utah (Burns & Brassard, 1982). This center is designed to meet the needs of families who have children attending district schools. The center offers parent education classes, counseling (individual, group, and family), and has an extensive lending library. The library contains parenting kits on such topics as child development, dealing with the handicapped child, and parenting skills. The Jordan Family Education Center is staffed by district school psychologists and social workers. Some of the courses offered at the Center for single parent families include "Coping with Family Break-Up, Separation and Divorce," and "How to Succeed as a Single Parent."

In some instances a school district does not offer a qualified guidance staff or family education center. If this is the case, then a teacher should refer the

single parent who is having difficulties with his or her child's adjustment to a private counseling agency.

Parents, as well as teachers, should be provided the information they need in order to better understand children's needs and how to fulfill them effectively. If parents and teachers are to assist pupils in dealing with separation and divorce, they need formal training. Parents can attend workshops for single parents at schools and mental health centers. Training for teachers can be obtained through pre-service education and through in-service workshops.

Chapter III

Procedures

Setting for Study

This study will involve the k-3 classroom teachers at Charles E. Bennett Elementary in Green Cove Springs, Florida, and Montclair Elementary in Orange Park, Florida, both located in Clay County. This Clay County area was selected as the setting of this study because of its immediacy and concern to the researcher. Clay County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state of Florida and includes a wide range of family incomes and backgrounds. The two schools were chosen because of their accessibility and convenience for the researcher.

Charles E. Bennett Elementary employed 35 k-3 classroom teachers for the school year 1982-1983. The student-teacher ratio was 22.6:1. The majority of the students who attend this school come from low-average income families and are dependent upon public financial assistance.

Montclair Elementary employed 18 k-3 classroom teachers for the school year 1982-1983. The student-teacher ratio was 21:1. The majority of the students who attend this school come from average to high-average income families.

### Instrumentation

Through the use of a questionnaire (appendix B) specifically designed for this study, the teachers will record the methods they used to assist pupils living in one-parent homes due to separation or divorce.

The questionnaire will be developed from the review of the literature. The questions will be determined on the basis of what the literature indicates that teachers should be doing to assist children from one-parent homes. The questionnaire will be used to survey the teachers in the sample using the following procedures:

(1) The principals at Charles E. Bennett Elementary and Montclair Elementary will be asked for administrative consent for the teachers to be used in the survey; (2) Upon administrative consent, each k-3 classroom teacher will be asked to participate in the study through a cover letter (appendix A); (3) If the teacher decides to participate, then he or she will answer the questions on the survey; (4) The questionnaire will then be returned by the classroom teacher to the researcher through the mail using a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

### Recording of Data

Tables will be used to record the data collected from the questionnaire. Each table will reflect how the

teachers of each grade level respond to a question. These tables will be represented by raw scores. After the tables have been developed, comparisons will be made to see how the teachers in each grade level assist pupils coming from one-parent homes. The results from the questionnaire will be used to decide if there is a need for formal training for classroom teachers in the area of separation and divorce. The data will reflect teachers' attitudes and how they assist pupils from one-parent homes. Comparisons will be made to see if teachers with more experience and higher degrees do more to assist pupils than newer teachers with bachelor degrees. Comparisons will also be made between grade levels to see how they are assisting pupils. The data will indicate the availability of the guidance staff in assisting pupils.

## Chapter IV

## Data

The number of questionnaires that were returned was 40 or 83%. The 40 teachers who participated in the survey were all k-3 classroom teachers. Tables 1-4 deal with teacher experience, training, and perceptions of their training. Information from these tables will be summarized by grade level.

Table 1

## Years of Elementary School Teaching Experience

<u>Years of Teaching Experience</u>	<u>0-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11-15</u>	<u>16-up</u>
Kindergarten	4	2	3	1
First Grade	7	2	1	1
Second Grade	7	1	0	1
Third Grade	0	5	2	3
Total	18	10	6	6



Table 2  
Degree Held

Degree	BA	MA	MA plus
Kindergarten	7	2	0
First Grade	11	0	0
Second Grade	8	1	0
Third Grade	8	0	2
Total	34	3	2

One kindergarten teacher did not respond to the question about the degree held.

Table 3  
In-service Workshops or College Courses  
to Help you Assist Pupils

Workshops/Courses	yes	no
Kindergarten	1	9
First Grade	0	10
Second Grade	1	8
Third Grade	0	9
Total	2	36

One first grade teacher and one third grade teacher did not respond to the question about training.

Table 4  
Perceived Adequacy of Training

Adequate Training	yes	no
Kindergarten	0	9
First Grade	1	8
Second Grade	3	6
Third Grade	1	9
Total	5	32

One kindergarten teacher and two first grade teachers did not respond to the question about adequacy of training.

To summarize by grade level, Table 4 reflects information about having enough training to deal with pupils from one-parent homes adequately. All of the kindergarten teachers who responded (9) said they did not have enough training. One kindergarten teacher said he or she had had some training, but felt that it was not enough. Table 2 reveals that seven of these kindergarten teachers held bachelor of arts degrees, two of them held master's degrees, and one kindergarten teacher did not respond.

In response to the questionnaire, eight first grade teachers felt they did not have enough training to deal

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with pupils from one-parent homes adequately as revealed in Table 4. One teacher felt he or she did have enough training. Out of the 10 teachers responding to the questionnaire, none of them had ever had any training dealing with pupils from one-parent homes. Table 2 reflects that all eleven of the first grade teachers held bachelor of arts degrees. The teacher who responded that he or she had had enough training had taught between 11-15 years.

In response to the questionnaire, three second grade teachers felt that they had had enough training; six of them felt they needed more training as reflected in Table 4. Only one teacher had had any professional training, and eight of them had had no training at all. Eight of the teachers held bachelor of arts degrees, and one held a master's degree. One of the teachers who said he or she had received enough training had 0-5 years experience, held a bachelors degree, and had received professional training in this area. Another of the second grade teachers that felt he or she had received enough training had 0-5 years teaching experience, held a bachelor of arts degree and had no professional training in this area. One other second grade teacher who felt he or she

had received enough training had 16-up years experience, held a master's degree, and had had no professional training in this area.

In response to the questionnaire, 9 third grade teachers felt they had not received enough training to deal with pupils from one-parent homes adequately. One teacher felt he or she had received enough training. Eight of the teachers held bachelor of arts degrees, and two of the teachers held master's plus. The teacher who felt he or she had received enough training in this area had taught between 11-15 years, held a bachelor of arts degree, and had had no professional training. This teacher also felt that a teacher should not assist pupils in trying to adjust to one-parent homes.

Tables 5-6 give information on class size and structure. Data from these tables are later summarized.

Table 5  
Size of Class

# of Students	16	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	28
Kindergarten	1	2	0	2	2	2	0	1	0	0
First Grade	0	1	4	2	1	3	0	0	0	0
Second Grade	0	3	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0
Third Grade	0	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	1
Total	1	7	6	5	6	9	3	1	1	1

Table 6  
Self Contained or Departmentalized

Type of Class	Self Contained	Departmentalized
Kindergarten	10	0
First Grade	7	4
Second Grade	5	4
Third Grade	4	5
Total	26	13

One third grade teacher did not respond to type of class.

The size of class, as reported in Table 5, varied from 16 to 28. The average size of class was 20.5.

Table 6 reveals that two-thirds of the classes were self-contained and one-third was departmentalized. All 10 kindergarten classrooms were self-contained.

Data from survey questions 8-11 are more effectively reported in descriptive form.

Item 8 on the questionnaire asked whether the teacher had a teacher's aide. Only one teacher out of 40 responded with a yes. This aide was a volunteer for 1½ hours per week. The other 39 teachers did not have an aide.

Item 9 on the questionnaire requested information on whether the school had a guidance counselor. All 40 of the responses were yes.

Item 10 on the questionnaire requested information on how many were on the guidance staff. Both of the schools employ a full-time guidance counselor and a full-time clerk.

Item 11 on the questionnaire requested information on whether the guidance counselor was available for counseling with pupils. All of the responses were yes, but 12 added that there was not enough time made available.

Tables 7-15 report data on methods teachers use to assist pupils. Table 16 reports teachers' attitudes toward providing assistance.

Table 7  
Teacher-Student Conferencing

Teacher-Student Conferencing	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	4	4	2	0
First Grade	2	5	4	0
Second Grade	2	3	3	1
Third Grade	1	5	3	0
Total	9	17	12	1

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 8  
Teacher-Parent Conferencing

Teacher-Parent Conferencing	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	1	7	2	0
First Grade	1	5	5	0
Second Grade	1	4	4	0
Third Grade	1	6	3	0
Total	4	22	14	0

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 9  
Classroom Readings and Discussions

Classroom Readings and Discussions	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	2	1	7	0
First Grade	0	0	8	3
Second Grade	0	2	5	2
Third Grade	1	1	7	1
Total	3	4	27	6

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 10  
Role Playing, Puppetry, and Art

Role Playing, Puppetry, and Art	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	2	0	5	3
First Grade	0	1	6	4
Second Grade	0	1	4	4
Third Grade	0	3	4	3
Total	2	5	19	14

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.



Table 11  
Slides, Tapes, and Movies

Slides, Tapes, and Movies	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	0	0	0	10
First Grade	0	0	0	11
Second Grade	0	0	0	9
Third Grade	0	0	0	10
Total	0	0	0	40

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 12  
Refer Child to Guidance Counselor

Refer Child to Guidance Counselor	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	1	2	7	0
First Grade	0	1	10	0
Second Grade	0	4	5	0
Third Grade	0	2	8	0
Total	1	9	30	0

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 13  
Refer Child to Agency

Refer Child to Agency	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	0	0	4	6
First Grade	0	0	3	7
Second Grade	0	0	5	4
Third Grade	0	1	2	7
*Total	0	1	14	24

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

Table 14  
Ignore the Problem

Ignore the Problem	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	0	0	2	8
First Grade	0	0	2	9
Second Grade	0	0	1	8
Third Grade	0	1	2	6
**Total	0	1	7	31

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

\*One first grade teacher did not respond.

\*\*One third grade teacher did not respond.

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Table 15

Other

Other	A	B	C	D
Kindergarten	*1	0	0	9
First Grade	0	0	1	10
Second Grade	0	0	0	9
Third Grade	0	0	0	10
Total	1	0	1	38

Pattern Response Scale: A = All the Time; B = Frequently; C = Seldom; D = Never.

\*Love the Child

Table 16

Should You Attempt to Assist Pupils

Attempt to Assist	Yes	No
Kindergarten	10	0
First Grade	11	0
Second Grade	9	0
Third Grade	6	3
Total	36	3

One third grade teacher did not respond.

A general summary of Tables 1-4 provides useful information. Of the teachers surveyed, 34 held bachelor of arts degree, 3 held a master's degree, and 2 held a master's plus. Two teachers out of 40 had received professional training either through college courses or in-service workshops. Only 5 teachers felt they had received enough training in this area; 32 felt they had not received enough training, and 2 teachers did not respond. Of the 5 teachers who said they had had enough training, only 1 of them had had any professional training, and 4 of the 5 felt the teacher should assist these pupils.

There were 5 teachers who held a master's degree or master's degree plus. Only one of them had received professional training in this area and he or she felt that it was not enough. All 5 of them felt teachers should assist pupils. The degree held and years teaching experience did not appear to affect the responses.

A summary of Tables 7-15 indicates that the method most often used by classroom teachers to assist pupils was teacher-parent conferencing. The second method that was employed by the teacher most frequently was teacher-student conferencing. The third was referral to the guid-

ance counselor. The fourth method was classroom readings and discussions. Fifth was role playing, puppetry, and art. The sixth most frequently used method was referral to an agency. The seventh was to ignore the problem altogether. Least frequent was the use of slides, tapes, and movies. There appeared to be no differences between grade levels as to which method was most frequently used to assist pupils coming from one-parent homes due to separation or divorce.

In response to Table 16, there were only 3 teachers out of 39 who responded by saying teachers should not assist pupils. One third grade teacher did not respond to this question. Two of the three did not give a reason why they should not try to assist the pupils. The one teacher who did give a reason said that he or she had been told by parents that it was none of the school's business. The other 36 teachers indicated that they felt like it was a function of the school because it affected the child's school work, and that they should assist the pupil in trying to adjust to the changing home-life situation.

Chapter V

Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusions

The 40 teachers who participated in this survey are only a fraction of the total population of kindergarten through third grade teachers in Clay County, Florida. For this reason, the results of this questionnaire cannot be generalized to the complete population and considered conclusive. In spite of this, however, the data provided by this study follow certain trends and shed light on a number of different areas. Qualified conclusions can still be derived from the results.

The amount of teaching experience, degree held, grade taught, size of class, type of class (self contained or departmentalized), and professional training in the area of one-parent homes did not influence the way the classroom teachers responded to the methods they used most frequently when trying to assist pupils during trying situations. The data do indicate that there is a need for professional training either through college courses or in-service workshops. Most of the teachers

feel inadequate to deal with this subject, but feel there is a need to do so.

If this questionnaire were being used with a larger population, the questions dealing with guidance counselor, guidance staff, and teacher's aides would be more significant. Both schools surveyed had a full-time clerk, and no teacher's aides. The guidance counselor was also available for some counseling. Because of the small sample size, it is not possible to determine whether or not the presence of a guidance counselor was significant. Even though it was not asked on the questionnaire, 12 of the teachers said that their guidance counselor did not have enough available time for counseling with pupils.

#### Recommendations

I would recommend that the survey be used with a larger population, perhaps several counties. This would give a wider range of data to compare. Certain recommendations can be derived from the existing data. Teachers need to be trained on how to assist pupils coming from one-parent homes. The county school board could provide in-service training based on the objectives mentioned in the review of the literature. In this way the teachers can be made aware of the methods available to them for use

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in the classroom when the need arises. Also, more time needs to be set aside for individual and group counseling by the guidance counselor. According to the experts, each child coming from a one-parent home needs some guidance and counseling to provide reassurance and to show the child that he or she is not alone.



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## APPENDIX

July 13, 1983

Dear Classroom Teacher,

I have recently been involved in an indepth research project to determine how k-3 classroom teachers assist pupils in adjusting to separation or divorce. A study conducted by Johnson (1977) shows that based upon current trends, estimates indicate that before the turn of the century more than half of all Americans will have been directly touched by a divorce. Within the past ten years the number of divorces per year has more than doubled, to over 1,000,000 in 1975, and the number of children involved has increased even faster than the divorce rate.

As a fellow Clay County Teacher, I feel there is a need for research in this area. To be effective teachers we must be concerned with the total development of the child. Information from this survey will assist us in determining what teachers are presently doing and to help us determine how we can be more effective.

All the questionnaires will be compiled. They will not be separated by individual teachers or schools. The results from the questionnaire will be used to decide if there is a need for formal training for classroom teachers on how to assist pupils in adjusting to separation and divorce in their homes. These results will be available on request.

Please complete the attached questionnaire and place it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope and return by July 23, 1983. Thank you for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Nancy L. Mitchell

Appendix A: Cover Letter to Teacher

How K-3 Classroom Teachers Assist Pupils Coming From One-Parent Homes Due to Separation or Divorce

1. How many years of elementary school teaching experience do you have?  
0 - 5 years \_\_\_\_\_ 11 - 15 years \_\_\_\_\_  
6 - 10 years \_\_\_\_\_ 16 - up \_\_\_\_\_
2. Degree held: BA \_\_\_\_\_ MA \_\_\_\_\_ MA plus \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you ever had any college courses or in-service workshops to help you assist pupils living in one-parent homes due to separation or divorce? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you feel you have had enough training in this area? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What grade do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many students were in your homeroom class this past school year? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Was your class self contained or departmentalized? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have a teacher's aide? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you have a guidance counselor at your school? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many do you have on the guidance staff at your school? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Is your guidance counselor available for counseling with pupils? \_\_\_\_\_
12. In dealing with children from one-parent homes, how often do you use the following methods:

Response Pattern Scale

- A. All the time
- B. Frequently
- C. Seldom
- D. Never

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher-student conferencing

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher-parent conferencing

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom readings and discussions

\_\_\_\_\_ Role playing, puppetry, and use of art

\_\_\_\_\_ Slides, tapes, and movies

\_\_\_\_\_ Refer the child to the school guidance counselor

\_\_\_\_\_ Refer the child to an outside counseling agency

\_\_\_\_\_ Ignore the problem

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

13. Do you feel that a classroom teacher should attempt to assist his or her pupils, why or why not?