

4-2010

The Effects of Divorce and Non-Nuclear Families on Educational Achievement and Attainment

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The Effects of Divorce and Non-Nuclear Families on Educational Achievement and Attainment

Abstract

In the past fifty to sixty years divorce rates have risen exponentially. In 1950 the divorce rate was approximately ten percent (Michael, 1988). Today, it towers at fifty percent (Amato, 2009). As divorce rates have risen, researchers have sought to examine its effects on children's education in public schools. The following work synthesizes the findings of this research. Early research has indicated that divorce has caused a significant decrease in student's academic success, achievement, and attainment. Additionally, divorce is sighted for increasing public school ills such as tardiness, skipping school, and suspension from school. In addition to the existing material on the subject of divorce and education, I have created and administered a survey, which seeks to further study the impact of divorce on student academia. My new data and research closely parallels and confirms previously created studies. The vast majority of research on divorce and education agrees that divorce does have an adverse effect on student achievement. Likewise, most research suggests that divorce increases student tardiness, skipping, and suspension. As divorce is increasingly known and accepted to negatively impact student performance it should be used sparingly, entangling fewer children in the first place. If divorce involving children cannot be avoided, greater measures to support and encourage children's continuing academic success should be put in place.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

MS in Special Education

Department

Education

First Supervisor

Susan M. Schultz

Subject Categories

Education

The Effects of Divorce and Non-Nuclear Families
on Educational Achievement and Attainment

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree M.S. Special Education

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April 2010

Abstract

In the past fifty to sixty years divorce rates have risen exponentially. In 1950 the divorce rate was approximately ten percent (Michael, 1988). Today, it towers at fifty percent (Amato, 2009). As divorce rates have risen, researchers have sought to examine its effects on children's education in public schools. The following work synthesizes the findings of this research. Early research has indicated that divorce has caused a significant decrease in student's academic success, achievement, and attainment. Additionally, divorce is sighted for increasing public school ills such as tardiness, skipping school, and suspension from school. In addition to the existing material on the subject of divorce and education, I have created and administered a survey, which seeks to further study the impact of divorce on student academia. My new data and research closely parallels and confirms previously created studies. The vast majority of research on divorce and education agrees that divorce does have an adverse effect on student achievement. Likewise, most research suggests that divorce increases student tardiness, skipping, and suspension. As divorce is increasingly known and accepted to negatively impact student performance it should be used sparingly, entangling fewer children in the first place. If divorce involving children cannot be avoided, greater measures to support and encourage children's continuing academic success should be put in place.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....1

Literature Review.....3-13

Survey School Information.....14-15

Findings/Results.....15-27

Final Analysis/Conclusion.....27-28

Survey/Appendix A.....29-31

References.....32-33

*The Effects of Divorced and Non-Nuclear Families
on Educational Achievement and Attainment*

Introduction: the History Behind Divorce

The events of the past half century have brought forth a variety of factors which have compromised the institution of marriage in our society. As divorce has become a socially accepted normalcy, its effects on our children and their educational achievement and attainment have been largely ignored.

Before the computer age, divorce was far less common than it is today. Divorce was extremely uncommon. Marriages typically only terminated as a result of some kind of severe abuse; spousal rape, physical abuse, substance abuse, and infidelity. These were about the only reasons that could legitimate divorce. Subsequently, there has been a socially “leftward” shift in American political mind since the antiestablishment era of the 1960’s and 1970’s.

This era was truly a political and societal revolution. The positive changes that emanated from it were accompanied by a variety of depredations which inadvertently contributed to the destruction of the American nuclear family and set the nation on a course whose end destination was the frivolity of marriage. This trivialization of marriage has wrought havoc on the lives and educations of the children who come from these ever numerous non nuclear families. Nostalgic historians and social physiologists typically accredit the previous era of low frequency divorce to a time of higher morality and values in American society.

However there are many historic, more practical reasons for the explosion of divorce rates that stemmed from the social liberalization of the American mind from the 1950’s to the 1980’s. These reasons include, but are not limited to the following predominant factors:

The first wave feminism movement at the turn of the century brought about the nineteenth amendment of the US Constitution in 1920. This crucial first step emboldened women and created substantive momentum to greater equality of women (Heffner, 2002).

This led to the second factor, income duality. With the advent of World War II America saw the inception of women into the working world. The era of consumerism that followed World War II required a massive labor force and ensured that this progress for women was not undone as soldiers returned home to work following the war. As women began to work they slowly became economic equals to their husbands. Woman's ability to earn a living severed her economic dependence on marriage and made divorce economically viable for her. This is perhaps the most significant and pervasive factor in the exponential growth in divorce rates (Clayton, Perry, Reed, and Winkler, 2005).

As women in the work place became an increasing norm, attempts to further their productivity was obligatory. This paved the way for increasing their access to education. This of course increased their economic independence, but also empowered them mentally and emotionally, which made them less dependent on men and marriage (Chafe, 1986).

Women's changing role within American society gained momentum and scope until second wave feminism came along. Then, it was truly a social revolution which completely turned gender roles and norms upside down. Once out of the home, with suffrage in hand women worked themselves into all fabrics of society. This caused an atrophied sense of identity as wives, and as mothers. In addition, the sexual liberation movement took off. Medical advances such as birth control, and the condom all but eliminated the last obstacles to independence (pregnancy, and acquisition of sexually transmitted disease) (Chafe, 1986).

Lastly, it was not only women who were changing. The American mind as a whole changed a great deal during this time period. There was a shift in mindsets, a social liberalization that spawned out of the antiestablishment drug culture of the 1960's and 1970's. After this time period, people were more overt with their sexuality, and less judgmental. In a sense society began to accept divorce (which was now entirely viable) along with all of the other major changes the social revolution brought with it (Chafe, 1986).

Since the passing of the nineteenth amendment woman have been energized politically, gained economic independence, gained access to education, been liberated sexually, and have escaped harsh judgments for gaining equality and independence (Clayton, et al., 2005). The increased ability to divorce has allowed women to escape relationships that are unhealthy in a variety of different ways. The acceptability of the divorce option is a great advancement in America's quest for social justice. These all sound like positive changes, so what is the problem?

Divorce: a Skyrocketing Trend

As the social revolution progressed in America, divorce rates have skyrocketed. In 1950 the divorce rate was between ten and twenty percent (Michael, 1988). Currently, it stands between forty and fifty percent (Amato, 2009). Divorce has been significantly overused and abused. When looking at each case individually it is hard to judge divorcees as being in the wrong. Who is to say that a given divorce is unwarranted? Yet, when looking at divorce rates as a whole, as they near fifty percent, it is quite clear that bad marriage and divorce premises are rampant in our society. The destruction of the sanctity of marriage is the primarily the cry from social conservatives. The real problems that stem from divorce are not adequately articulated. As a result, genuine concern over divorce fails to gain traction in America. The real problem is that

accompanying all of these historic societal improvements is one large and pervasive side effect, the affect of divorce of America's children (Eldar-Avidan, Haj-Yahia, and Greenbaum, 2009).

As stated, individual divorces cannot be judged under the innocent until proven guilty paradigm, which is our society's modus operandi. However, no one disputes the notion that divorce is too common in America. Likewise, few are willing to challenge the idea that divorce is having deep negative impacts on the educational achievement and attainment of our children. So it seems we are left with the negative facts regarding divorce, but with seemingly no recourse for improvement.

Divorce and Familial Destruction

As one might expect, the higher the divorce rate climbs, the number of children growing up in single parent families is rising. In the 1950's approximately seven percent of children were growing up in single parent home. As the dust settles on the counter culture revolution of the 1960's and 1970's this number had more than doubled to about sixteen percent. The economic boom years of the early nineties exacerbated the problem by the increasing economic mobility of potential divorcees. By the mid 1990's one in four children came from a single parent home. At last measure, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) estimated that half of all children lived in single parent situations (NCES, Indicator 11).

When the nuclear family is broken up children are usually the hardest hit. Initially, they often witness the unpleasant period of time when their parent's relationship sours. This frequently involves arguments among parents, unpleasant comments/insults, parents seeing other people, and a loss of family time and togetherness. Many times parents compete for their children's affection in a tug of war of emotions (Elder-Avidan, et al., 2009).

When this happens children are left to wonder if the sudden dissolution of their parent's relationship, which seemed solid for their entire lives, is an indication of their own relationships. This can cause them to lose confidence in their friends and in the rest of the family. In essence, their view of relationships transforms from permanent unbreakable bonds to precarious confederations among parties that mutually benefit from one another. This is a very difficult realization for children to take on during their most formative years (Elder-Avidan, et al., 2009).

These emotional changes although difficult to quantify are very real. However, there are more concrete problems brought about by divorce. The most obvious of which is the frequent and extended absence of one parent. When a divorce occurs one parent (typically the male) leaves the home. Whatever the reasons for the divorce, the children will most likely miss the exiled parent. The remaining parent does not possess the ability to council or console the children. Therefore, they must suffer through. As a result, some researchers have estimated that mental health problems occur at a rate three hundred percent higher in children from divorced families than in nuclear families (Shifflett, & Cummings, 1998).

Children of divorced parents are often distanced from both parents, not just the one who has moved out. This is for several reasons. The first reason is that single parents are just not home as often. In many cases the parents will both have to find additional income to maintain the lifestyle they enjoyed while sharing finances with their spouse. This means they work more hours, or get another job. This of course takes time away from interacting with the child. Second, as parents begin dating again they may leave their kids to someone else (grandmother, babysitter, etc) so that they can date as a normal adult. This of course limits child and parent interactions as well (Elder-Avidan, et al., 2009).

This problem is exacerbated greatly when the child is two years or younger. At this age a child seems to be developing physical skills more than mental ability. In actuality, these years are just as important to mental and emotional development. This development is contingent on the involvement of both parents. Children who were missing a parent during this time period were cognitively delayed when compared with children who had dual parent involvement. Whether the child's development lagged as a result of not having both parents, or whether it was due to strain on the one parent left as sole provider was not clear. However, overall the negative effects of single parent infant rearing were clear (Culp, Schadle, Robinson, and Culp, 2000).

The factors that cause a drop in child/parent interaction after a divorce are numerous. However, the effects can often be quite similar. The effects of divorce and non-nuclear families on educational achievement and attainment are typically negative. A synthesis of research on the subject will explore these adverse effects more thoroughly. In this study students from divorced or non nuclear families will be examined for educational achievement, educational attainment, and propensity for criminality.

Divorce and Education

The adverse effect of divorce on children's educational achievement has been widely documented. A literature study and evaluation on this matter reveals that it is perhaps the most agreed upon result of divorce. Divorce is not an immediate death sentence for the future of the children involved. For many students, about two thirds, academic and social life outside the home perpetuates with minor interruption. However, in many cases, over one third, divorce has a huge impact on children's education (Bloom, 2009). In summation, children "from single parent homes were more often classified as 'low achievers' than children from intact families" (NAESP

& Charles Kittering, 1990). However, an in depth statistical analysis provides for more detailed and less refutable evidence than the general consensus.

When looking at children of divorced homes, almost immediately researchers saw a jump in truancy. Students were, “more apt to be late to school or late more often and miss school altogether. They were also more likely than their counterparts from intact families to spontaneously skip school” (NAESP & Charles Kittering 1990, p. 33). The Times Educational Supplement’s 2009 study found that as many as thirteen percent of students whose parents recently divorced began skipping school (Carlile, 1991). In addition to outright skipping, an additional twenty percent were either expelled or suspended in the years following the divorce (Bloom, 2009). These numbers were proven to correlate with the post divorce time frame in which they occurred. More telling is that absenteeism spiked on Mondays, and Fridays, when students were often transitioning from living with one parent to another as is often the case with divorcee children. That is to say that, when children switched from living with one parent to the other as in joint custody cases they were increasingly absent from school. As student minds become infatuated with the effects of divorce they are drawn away from other areas. One survey found that twenty-four percent of these children “stopped caring about their education as a result of the domestic upheaval going on around them” (Bloom, 2009, p. 26). These factors all tallied up to an alarming bottom line statistic. It was found that thirty-nine percent of post divorce students saw a drop in their grade point averages (Bloom, 2009). From analyzing and synthesizing research, it is clear that divorce has had a detrimental effect on the educational achievement of students. It is one of the foremost of depredations that can be heaved upon students as they fight their way through the marathon that is academia.

Divorce on Development

The research that has been done illuminating the increasing propensity of divorce and its' negative effects on student educational achievement has been paramount. However, it is fairly basic in nature and only supplies us with the effect. In order to make positive change, researchers must find the cause, or the "why" so that we can work to reverse divorce's ugly trends on our children's education.

The time spent in public school is the most formative years of a persons' life. During this time period self-concepts, identities, work ethic, social competence, and intellectual abilities are all formed. This is the case for the majority of students from nuclear families. Likewise, most students from divorced families experience appropriate levels of development in these areas. However, for that roughly one third of students who are largely impacted by divorce, development can be significantly delayed, or remain incomplete. It is during these years that both parents, "positively influence their children's intellectual development" (Williams, and Radin, 1993, p. 309). However, because the overwhelming majority of children reside with their mothers after a divorce, the effects of father absenteeism are the most frequently witnessed. Researchers also agree that they are the most detrimental.

When fathers are present they are heralded for "increasing academic expectations" and "greater social competence" among their children (Culp, et al., 2000). The presence of a good father is attributed to increased social capability, poise, and academic abilities in their children (Amato, 1994). Authors on the subject also point out that a, "closeness with the father is an important factor in fostering self-confidence" (Culp, et al, 2000).

The immense benefits of having father involvement in unison with the mother are contrasted with equally immense damaging consequences of not having proper paternal

involvement as a result of divorce. When the father is not present school age children more frequently exhibit emotional insecurities and often suffer from low self esteem (Biller, 1993).

Christina Tait, contributor of the website Divorce Aid, confirms that these children have problems with their self-esteem. She also asserts that these children have problems maintaining their own friendships (Bloom, 2009).

As we look deeper into the struggles of children from non-nuclear families it is clear they suffer a great deal deep down under the surface of a sometimes tranquil exterior façade. These children are subject to lower academic expectations from their parents. Their seized intellectual development, crumbling self-worth, and increased social incompetence coalesce yielding a perfect storm that stifles academic achievement (Culp, et al., 2000).

Despite the intense scrutiny and blame placed on male divorcees there is more than enough blame to go around. Mothers too play a vital role in the lowering of these children's chances of success. It has long been known that even amongst married couples, "maternal work status is associated with children's behavioral problems" (Culp, et al., 2000, p. 34). Studies have found that the more a woman works and is away from her children the worse off they are educationally and behaviorally. Currently, seventy-five percent of married women are employed outside the home (Culp, et al., 2000). When they divorce and leave their spouses these women will, more often than not, face challenging economic circumstances. As a result they will begin working more hours, or pick up a second job to make up for the husband's lost income. Children too will also make the sad, yet noble effort to contribute to the broken family's finances as they "start working part-time...to cover their own expenses" (Elder-Avidan, et al., 2009, p. 42). This paves the way for decreased mother-child interaction regarding academics, while opening the gates for the increase in truancy indicated above. Worse, history shows that these efforts will be

in vain, divorced women and their children will have to kick hard to keep their heads above water, seldom gaining financial ground. Statistically, divorced mothers with children will see a seventy-three percent decline in their standard of living (Carlile, 1991). In essence, these women have relegated themselves, and their children to a lower socioeconomic class. As one descends the rungs of socioeconomic status, they are faced with the obligatory atrophy in academic achievement and attainment. Likewise, their propensity for criminality is greatly increased (Roberts, 2004).

Divorce and Criminality

As previously stated, when parents split up, children most often cohabitate with their mothers who are often the sole caregivers until the child reaches adulthood. This is problematic for yet another reason. The absence of a father figure is commonly linked to criminal behavior. As these children reach their teenage years they are more likely to exhibit criminal activity, “teenagers are at greater risk of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use, and suicide” (Roberts, 2004, p. 2). Fatherless young men are six times more likely to be convicted of crime. Additionally, young women, “are three times more likely to engage in sexual relations by the time they turn fifteen, and five times more likely to become a teen mother” (Roberts, 2004, p. 3). A single teenage mother in turn tries her best to raise a child that will likely complete the cycle of detriment discussed throughout the whole of this body of writing. These children at a young age are started down a path that runs contrary to the law. Once a child is born, or a conviction is cemented to ones record academic, and economic opportunity are unlikely. This deprives the adolescent, as well as any children they have in the future. These future children then began life’s great race shackled by chains, which diminish their chances of success.

Conclusion

The societal progress made as a result of the women's suffrage movement, first wave feminist movement, the social revolution of the 1960's and 1970's, and second wave feminism/women's liberation movements were positive and long overdue. However, they brought with their equality several problems. Because women were so long deprived their basic freedoms the problems associated with their gains have been largely overlooked. The persons responsible for bringing these problems into the limelight would perhaps thought to be in opposition of the noble cause for which so many women have toiled. Whatever the reason the effects are the same. With women's advancements came economic and social freedom. With economic and social freedom came the increase of divorce. Divorce has increased fivefold since 1950 alone. As divorce rates rose, so too did the number of children living in divorced parent situations. The increase in children growing up with divorced parents has had profound negative consequences for America's children. After analyzing, and synthesizing research the following conclusions were ascertained. Starting from birth, children from single parent homes suffered cognitive developmental delay. As young children their social competence, intellectual development, and academic success suffer. As they age, these problems begin to translate to the classroom. In schools these children display a wide array of problematic behavior. This behavior in turn leads to poor academic performance. Children from nonnuclear families were found to be low achievers, more likely to skip school, or be expelled. Moreover, thirty-nine percent of them saw a significant drop in academic performance. These shortcomings; emotional malnourishment, incomplete cognitive development, and academic underachievement unfortunately were often seen to lead to increased risk for criminal behavior.

Survey District

The following lines will put into context the district where the survey study was conducted. For purposes of academic and research integrity, it should be noted that the author and survey conductor of this work was raised in, and attended the survey community's public school system. The survey school is a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade public school. It is located in Ontario County, in upstate New York. The said district is a suburb of Rochester, New York. This school district is one of the few that is growing in New York. It is an increasingly wealthy and affluent community. The graduation rate is consistently in the upper ninety percent range. Likewise, the percentage of college bound seniors is consistently in the upper eighties to low nineties. As a result, it may be argued that this district might not be the best choice to represent the country as a whole, but no single district could possibly accomplish this. Despite the above par socioeconomics of the district, some significant correlations and determinations among divorce and education can be made.

The Survey

The survey was administered to seventy-six ninth and tenth grade students in the previously mentioned district. Survey takers were assured that their individual identities would remain anonymous, and that survey results would only be discussed as a group and not individually. Additionally, they were assured that their participating district would not be mentioned by name. These guarantees of anonymity combined with the students close relationship with the survey's proctor can be used to substantiate the validity of the survey's results. The survey questions and potential responses can be found in Appendix A

The function of this research was to compare the effects divorce and non-nuclear familial structures on the participants with existing bodies of research. In doing so, the new survey will

be compared to existing bodies of work. The existing results would then either receive confirmation of their results, or results would be inconsistent. If result were inconsistent it would suggest that correlations thought to exist between divorce and school performance need further study for conclusions to be drawn.

It should be noted that, in previous studies a significant negative correlation was found among students of divorced parents and their academic success. From the beginning of a child's life, if raised in a split parent situation, the child is often cognitively delayed (Culp, et al., 2000). Children of divorce are said to be three times more likely to have mental health problems (Shifflett, & Cummings, 1998). Approximately one third of divorcee children suffer significant negative impacts in the area of education (Bloom, 2009). Specifically, these children are more likely; to skip school, be suspended/expelled, stop caring about education (Bloom, 2009). In summation, thirty-nine percent of them will see a drop in their grades during their parents divorce or after it (Bloom, 2009).

Survey Findings/Results

The ten question survey mentioned above was taken by eighty students. Four surveys were omitted from the results process for inconsistencies, which indicated that they were not completed carefully, or thoughtfully. Thus, there were seventy-six surveys analyzed. Of these seventy-six, fifty-one students came from "intact" families where the student lives with both biological parents. Twenty-five students reported living in an "alternative" setting. This initial information could be used to validate previous findings that suggest there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and the rate of divorce. Previously, it has been suggested that divorce is less common among affluent communities and peoples. Such was the case in my study, with approximately one third of participants coming from divorced families. When

compared with a national divorce rate of about fifty percent this district seems to have fared well and complies with existing findings.

Question 1 asked students what their current grade point average was. For ease of analysis students will be referred to as being in one of two groups: Students from nuclear families and students from non-nuclear families. The results are indicated in Data Table #1. They show a significant relationship between “intact” and “alternative” family arrangements. As shown, fifty-two percent of students from non-nuclear families had an average below mastery level. While only sixteen percent scoring in the “A” range.

Conversely, ninety-eight percent of students from nuclear families scored in the mastery range of eighty-five or higher. Seventy-eight percent scored in the “A” range. Looking at Question 1 and Data Table # 1 an obvious dependent relationship can be seen between academic success and the structure of the student’s family.

The results for Question 1 and Data Table #1 are consistent with the body of research that was previously synthesized. This body of research indicated that twenty-four percent of students stopped caring about their education (Bloom, 2009). One can infer from Data Table # 1 that sixteen percent of students stopped caring about their grades as they let them dip below seventy-five percent.

1. What is your current overall grade point average?

- a. 65-75*
- b. 75-85*
- c. 85-90*
- d. 90-95*
- e. 95-100*

Data Table Question #1

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Grade Range</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>65-75</i>	<i>4 (16%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>75-85</i>	<i>9 (36%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>85-90</i>	<i>8 (32%)</i>	<i>10 (20%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>90-95</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>23 (45%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>95-100</i>	<i>3 (12%)</i>	<i>17 (33%)</i>

Question 2 asked students what level of education they were planning on attaining.

Among students from non-nuclear families, thirty-six percent stated they planned on attending two years of college or less. Of these respondents, less than a quarter of them plan on completing more than four years of collegiate education.

Among the students from nuclear families, only one child indicated not planning on receiving a degree of four years or more. Ninety-eight percent of this group planned on attending at least a four year degree or higher. Of these respondents, eighty percent of them indicated they would pursue a Master's or PHD.

Comparing how the two groups responded reveals a large disparity of results. Students from divorced parents participating in this study plan on attending significantly less schooling than the other study group. It is well documented that people with higher levels of education will reach a higher socioeconomic status, while the converse is true.

2. What is the highest level of education you plan on completing?

- a. High School only
- b. Associate degree (2yr. college degree)
- c. Bachelors degree (4yr. college degree)
- d. Masters degree (2 yr. college degree in addition to a Bachelors)
- e. Doctorate/PHD.

Data Table #2

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Level of Education Planned</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Associates</i>	<i>8 (32%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Bachelor's</i>	<i>10 (40%)</i>	<i>10 (20%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>4 (16%)</i>	<i>26 (51%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>PHD</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>15 (29%)</i>

Question 3 and Data Table # 3 dealt with absenteeism or skipping school. The absences indicated in this table do not include days that a student was sick or had a medical problem. Therefore, they more accurately indicate the number of days that the students actually skipped school outright.

The students from the divorced family group did skip school slightly more often. Only thirty-six percent of them reported not skipping school at all. The majority of these students skipped school between one to seven days. An alarming twenty percent skipped regularly (four or more days in only half a year).

Students from nuclear families rarely skipped school. Ninety-six percent of them missed three days or fewer, while only four percent of them missed four or more days. Among students from intact families school attendance was very good and not a significant demographic.

The results from Question 3 and Data Table # 3 are similar to those found in other bodies of work on the subject. One study noted that about thirteen percent of students with divorced parents regularly skipped school (Carlile, 1991). In this newly conducted study the number was twenty percent. Some previous authors have suggested that students of divorced parents use joint custody to make easier the disappearing acts that skipping school requires. Whatever the cause, these numbers are fairly close to one another, and both agree that students of divorced parents skip school more frequently.

3. *Not counting days you were sick, how many school days have you missed so far this year?*

- A. *None*
- B. *1-3 days*
- C. *4-7 days*
- D. *8-10 days*
- E. *11 or more*

Data Table #3

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Absenteeism</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>9 (36%)</i>	<i>24 (47%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>1-3 Days Missed</i>	<i>11 (44%)</i>	<i>25 (49%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>4-7 Days Missed</i>	<i>3 (12%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>8-10 Days Missed</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>11 or more Days Missed</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>

Question 4 and Data Table # 4 asked students how many days they arrived to school late, or left school early. Among students from non-nuclear families, thirty-six percent missed a partial school day four or more times in only half a school year. Only twenty-eight percent of these

students did not miss a partial day of school. Again custody shuffling is often attributed to this problem.

The opposite was found among students from intact families. Forty-one percent of them had not missed a partial day of school at the half way point of the school year. Only eight percent of them missed four or more partial days of school.

Again living with, or without ones nuclear family seems to have an effect on another educational ill. Students from non-nuclear families not only missed more days of school outright (as shown in Data Table # 3) but they missed many more partial days of school when compared to students who lived with both biological parents.

4. *How many days were you late to school or left early this school year?*

- A. *None*
- B. *1-3 days*
- C. *4-7 days*
- D. *8-10 days*
- E. *11 or more*

Data Table # 4

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Tardy/Left Early</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>7 (28%)</i>	<i>21 (41%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>1-3 Days</i>	<i>10 (40%)</i>	<i>25 (49%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>4-7 Days</i>	<i>4 (16%)</i>	<i>3 (6%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>8-10 Days</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>11 or more Days</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>

Question 5 asked respondents how many days they were suspended during the school year. Students from divorced parents again were over represented in this matter too. Sixteen

percent of them had been suspended from school at the half way point of the school year when the survey was given. This is consistent with Carlile (1991) and Bloom's (2009) research which stated that approximately twenty percent of children from divorced parents are expelled in a given school year. The survey distributed in this study shows the rate of suspension was sixteen percent. This small deviation validates the existing body of research.

Students from nuclear homes again made the case for the traditional family. Only one respondent had been suspended during the current academic year. When compared to the other research group, that is a significantly smaller frequency.

5. From grades 7-12 how many days have you been suspended from school for disciplinary reasons?

- a. None*
- b. 1-2 days*
- c. 3-5 days*
- d. 6-10 days*
- e. More than 10 days*

Data Table # 5

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Days Suspended Grades 7-12</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>21 (84%)</i>	<i>50 (98%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>1-2 Days</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>3-5 Days</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>6-10 Days</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>10 or More Days</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>

Question 6 asked students how frequently they completed their homework on time. While the results were not as dramatic as some of the other questions, the results followed the same basic trend. Students from non-nuclear families turned in homework on time less often. The majority of these respondents indicating they did not always complete their homework on time. Sixteen percent of these students sometimes or rarely completed their homework on time.

However, the majority of students from intact families always completed their homework on time, and ninety-eight percent of them answered that they always or almost always completed their homework on time. Again we see a negative relationship with divorce and an educational ill.

6. How often do you complete your homework on time?

- a. Complete all homework on time*
- b. Complete the majority of homework on time*
- c. Complete some of my homework on time*
- d. Complete few assignments on time*
- e. Rarely complete homework*

Data Table # 6

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Complete Homework on Time</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>All on Time</i>	<i>8 (32%)</i>	<i>27 (53%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Majority on Time</i>	<i>13 (52%)</i>	<i>23 (45%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Some on Time</i>	<i>3 (12%)</i>	<i>1 (2%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Few on time</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>Rarely on Time</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>

Question 7 shifted focus from students to their parents directly. It asked how students perceived their parent's interest/involvement in their academic success. Among students from

divorced homes only sixty-four percent answered that both parents were highly interested in their success. An alarming thirty-six percent of them responded that one or both parents did not care at all about their academic success.

Students from nuclear family situations again responded more favorably. Eighty-four percent of them stated that both parents were highly interested in their academic performance. Only two respondents stated that their parents did not care about their academic success. It would seem then that parents who stay married and living together with their children are, or at least appear to their children to be invested in their academic success. One can infer that because these students perceive their parents as concerned with their academic success, this raises academic and behavioral expectations. As a result, these students perform better academically. Likewise, they are less often to engage in negative school behaviors such as skipping, or suspension.

7. When it comes to your grades and academic success your parents are?

- a. Both parents are highly interested and involved*
- b. One parent is highly interested/involved, the other is not*
- c. Neither parent is interested/involved*

Data Table # 7

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Parents Interested in Academic Success</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Both Highly Interested</i>	<i>16 (64%)</i>	<i>43 (84%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>One Interested One Not</i>	<i>7 (28%)</i>	<i>6 (12%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Neither Interested</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>2 (4%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>

Question 8 asked students if their parents help or check their homework. The results here showed no relationship among divorced or intact families. Perhaps there genuinely was no relationship. However, it could be attributed to the fact that parents of advanced students who often come from intact families do not feel the need to check up on their children as much because they are already consistently performing at a high level. The other thought is that many intact family students are in classes that are advanced to the point where their parents are unable to give much assistance with it. These inferences are based only on classroom experience from informal conversations with students and cannot be pontificated as statistically drawn assertions.

8. *When completing homework your parents?*
- a. *Help with and check your homework regularly*
 - b. *Sometimes help with and check your homework*
 - c. *Rarely help or check your homework*
 - d. *My parents don't care about my homework at all*

Data Table # 8

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Parents and Homework</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Help and Check Regularly</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>4 (8%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Help and Check Sometimes</i>	<i>10 (40%)</i>	<i>18 (35%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Help and Check Rarely</i>	<i>12 (48%)</i>	<i>23 (45%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Do Not Care</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>6 (12%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>

Question 9 was used to separate students into two groups. It asked who they lived with. The question was placed at the end of the survey intentionally. By placing this question at the end of the survey respondents were not privy to the purpose of the survey. As a result, their responses were hopefully more genuine and not guided by emotion. For example, if a student from divorced parents knew the survey was about divorce and education he or she might not want to admit that it had had an effect on their education. Or, the student might overstate the effects of the divorce on his or her education because it has been difficult for them emotionally but not necessarily educationally.

Nearly half of students from divorced parents indicated that they split time between parents. This is often the case, and therefore no surprise. However, the prior research suggested that these dual custody situations are often more volatile and contentious, resulting in higher propensities for student shortcomings in the field of education.

9. *Who do you live with?*
 - a. *Both biological parents*
 - b. *One biological parent*
 - c. *Spilt time with separated/divorced parents*
 - d. *Neither biological parent*

Data Table # 9

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Live With</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Both Biological Parents</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>	<i>51 (100%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>One Biological Parent</i>	<i>11 (44%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Split time with Separated/Divorced Parents</i>	<i>12 (48%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Neither Biological Parent</i>	<i>2 (8%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>

Question 10 was the final question of the survey. It was placed at the end of the survey so that students from divorced families would hopefully, by answering the above questions, be forced to think and reflect a little on what impact their parents divorce had on them as students. Among students from divorced parents fifty-six percent indicated some negative impact on their education. The other forty-four percent said that their parents' divorce had little impact. These numbers show a slightly higher relationship between divorce and negative effects on education than the body of existing research.

10. *What impact has your parent's divorce had on your academic performance/success?*
- a. None, my parents are not divorced*
 - b. It has had a significant negative impact*
 - c. It has had a small negative impact*
 - d. It has had little to no impact*

Data Table # 10

<i>Letter Choice</i>	<i>Impact of Your Parents Divorce</i>	<i>Respondents from Non-nuclear Family</i>	<i>Respondents from Nuclear Family</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Parents Not Divorced</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>	<i>51 (100%)</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Significant Negative Impact</i>	<i>5 (20%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Small Negative Impact</i>	<i>9 (36%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Little Negative Impact</i>	<i>11 (44%)</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>(%)</i>

Final Analysis/Conclusion

Over the past fifty to sixty years divorce rates have risen sharply. Naturally, the number of children living with and being raised by non-nuclear families has risen dramatically. Today, the divorce rate is somewhere around fifty percent. Likewise, the number of children being raised by divorced parents parallels this trend. As children with divorced families became more prevalent, researchers began to study the effects of growing up in a non-nuclear family on the lives of these children. Researchers have become increasingly concerned with the effects of divorce on the children's education.

Existing bodies of research have all shown that divorce is having a negative impact of student education. This research has shown that tardiness, skipping, and suspension have all risen among students with divorced parents. Similarly, confidence, grades, and level of educational attainment have decreased among students whose parents have divorced. This research does not guarantee academic failure among students with divorced parents. For about two-thirds of these

students, academics will be relatively unfazed. However, the remaining third is said to exhibit negative consequences.

My own research, while much smaller in scale, can be used to validate the existing body of research on the subject. Although conducted on a unique student body, my research tightly paralleled the assertions made by other studies. Thus, they serve to solidify the findings and support one another. After analyzing previous studies on the subject of divorce and education as well as my own study it can be said with confidence that divorce and the non-nuclear family have a significant negative impact on student's academic success, achievement, and attainment.

These findings should be used first to incentivize people to not divorce by either not engaging in marriage, or by working through marital problems more tenaciously. This is so important because of the large and consistently negative impact divorce has had on student's education.

Furthermore, these findings should serve as a caution to divorcing parents and the people who support their children. Many of these children will find continuing educational success an increasing challenge in the years during and after their parents divorce. These, students should be more closely monitored and supported so that their education does not become a casualty of their parents divorce.

Appendix A

1. *What is your current overall grade point average?*
 - a. *65-75*
 - b. *75-85*
 - c. *85-90*
 - d. *90-95*
 - e. *95-100*

2. *What is the highest level of education you plan on completing?*
 - a. *High School only*
 - b. *Associate degree (2yr. college degree)*
 - c. *Bachelors degree (4yr. college degree)*
 - d. *Masters degree (2 yr. college degree in addition to a Bachelors)*
 - e. *Doctorate/PHD.*

3. *Not counting days you were sick, how many school days have you missed so far this year?*
 - A. *None*
 - B. *1-3 days*
 - C. *4-7 days*
 - D. *8-10 days*
 - E. *11 or more*

4. *How many days were you late to school or left early this school year?*
 - A. *None*
 - B. *1-3 days*
 - C. *4-7 days*
 - D. *8-10 days*
 - E. *11 or more*

5. *From grades 7-12 how many days have you been suspended from school for disciplinary reasons?*
 - a. *None*
 - b. *1-2 days*
 - c. *3-5 days*
 - d. *6-10 days*
 - e. *More than 10 days*

6. *How often do you complete your homework on time?*
 - a. *Complete all homework on time*
 - b. *Complete the majority of homework on time*
 - c. *Complete some of my homework on time*
 - d. *Complete few assignments on time*
 - e. *Rarely complete homework*

7. *When it comes to your grades and academic success your parents are?*
 - a. *Both parents are highly interested and involved*
 - b. *One parent is highly interested/involved, the other is not*
 - c. *Neither parent is interested/involved*

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 - c. *It has had a small negative impact*
 - d. *It has had little to no impact*

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