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A Study of Kindergarten through Eighth-Grade Teachers'
Perceptions of the Impact Gender Plays on
Students Involved in Divorce

Lindenwood University Ed.D.

Student

by

Amanda Lukefahr

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

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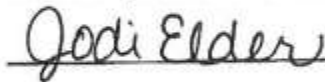
This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education



Dr. Pam Spooner, Dissertation Chair

5-1-2019

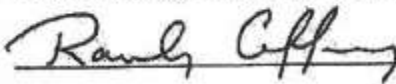
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Date



Dr. Randy Caffey, Committee Member

5-1-2019

Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Amanda Lee Lukefahr

Signature: Amanda L Lukefahr Date: 5-1-19

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Pam Spooner, Dr. Randy Caffey, and Dr. Jodi Elder. Each of you provided beneficial insight and guidance throughout my doctoral journey. To Dr. Pam Spooner, my dissertation chair, thank you for your immense amount of help and constant encouragement. Thank you for not giving up on me. Additionally, I would like to thank my Truman family, specifically my first-grade team. I appreciate all of your encouraging words.

Next, I would like to thank my parents, especially my mom for instilling in me a hard work ethic. Thank you for always supporting and believing in me. To my four kids, Jaedon, Landon, Beckett, and Bexlee, thank you for understanding why I was constantly busy. I am sorry for the time I was away at class, but I hope it taught you to always work hard towards your dreams. I would also like to thank my husband and best friend, Chris. There were times I wanted to quit, but you would not let me. Thank you! Your love and support mean the world to me. I love you very much. Last, but not least, I would like to thank God. Without Him, none of this would have been possible.

Abstract

This mixed-methods study examined the perceptions of kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers on the impact gender had on the academics and behavioral performance of students from divorced settings. The researcher electronically contacted 332 kindergarten through eighth-grade educators from Mid-Missouri. Out of the 332 teachers, 84 chose to complete the on-line survey, *Perceptions of Children of Divorce*, consisting of 34 Likert-scale items and four open-ended questions. Based on the findings, the researcher determined kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers perceived the gender of the child from a divorced situation influenced the academics and behavioral performance. In addition, teachers perceived there to be more behavioral issues than academic issues, especially in boys. Throughout the survey findings, educators noted the importance of positive co-parenting relationships and divorce care programs for students experiencing a parental divorce. Future research on the impact divorce programs have on children of divorce would be beneficial to educators and parents.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In recent years, accountability has become a tremendous influence on teachers and students (Marsh, Farrell, & Bertrand, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016). For many school-aged children, their efforts and attention in the classroom may be impacted by their lives before they even step foot on the school bus in the morning (Crede, Wirthwein, McElvany, & Steinmayr, 2015). More than a million American students' have been exposed to their parents' divorces each year (Morin, 2018). Due to the purity of character, students at this age are not able to fully process traumatic events, such as divorce (Rodman, 2015). Regardless of age, gender, and culture, children of divorced parents have experienced psychological issues, such as depression and anxiety (Morin, 2018).

Students' school experiences have been further complicated by the increasing incidents of divorces within their families (Rodman, 2015). Teachers noticed internalizing and externalizing issues from students of divorced backgrounds (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). In this study, the researcher focused on the impact parental divorce had on children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The researcher used two questions to determine if and how the parental divorce influenced boys or girls differently. The researcher collected and analyzed teacher perceptions to help answer the research questions.

Background of the Study

Divorce was described as one of the most stressful life events one could experience (Mucaj & Xeka, 2015; Rodman, 2015; Weaver & Schofield, 2015). According to the United States Bureau of Census, in 2013, approximately 40% of

Americans' first marriages resulted in divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2013). Over half of the divorced couples reported having had a child under the age of 18 (Amato, 2000). One in four of these children lived with only one of their parents (Amato, 2000). More than 50% of children lived only with their mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2013).

In 2013, Arkowitz and Lilienfeld reported, in over a year, more than one million children experienced the effects of their parents going through the divorce process. These startling statistics suggest a significant number of students in American schools today may be experiencing the effects of a parental divorce. On average, 60% of divorced parents remarried within six years after a divorce; which could potentially add another stressor to the children involved (Rodman, 2015). According to Rodman (2015), remarriage caused the children to adapt to a new family dynamic and created a seismic shift in the parent-child relationship. Unfortunately, Emery (2012) found half of remarriages also ended in divorce. DeLongis and Zwicker (2017) noted the divorce rate of remarriages was steadily increasing. Consequently, some children could have witnessed multiple divorces before graduating high school; these disruptions in their lives may have posed adjustment problems for the students in school (Emery, 2012). Based on these statistics many children in today's American schools could be affected by parental divorce and this could impact their academic and behavioral performance in schools.

Divorce has become more socially acceptable in American society today (Rappaport, 2013). In a kindergarten through eighth-grade classroom setting, it has not been uncommon to have several students coming from a divorced setting (Guttadauro, 2013). Therefore, it has become extremely critical for a teacher to be prepared for the

wide array of emotions the child may experience due to the turmoil they may face at home (Guttadauro, 2013). Guttadauro (2013) noted, parental divorce contributed and may have created psychological and/or behavioral problems in children, which may potentially have challenged teachers when dealing with the issues. Observational evidence by educators has revealed children raised in a divorced family were more likely to face challenges in their educational lives; this was especially true of young boys (Seltzer, 1994; Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Foulkes-Jamison, 2013).

Fagan and Churchill (2012) mentioned divorce weakened children's educational attainment. Elementary, middle, and junior high school students who experienced divorce instantaneously dropped at least half a grade point average in English and Math on standardized tests compared to peers from intact families (Fagan & Churchill, 2012). As a result, a gap in performance continued through high school for these students (Fagan & Churchill, 2012). In contrast, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found 75% of children from a divorced setting did not exhibit any major negative behavioral or academic problems. This left 25% of children from the same background to display academic and behavioral challenges (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). In the past, there was very little literature written on how educators take action on behavioral, emotional, and educational issues related to children of divorced parents (Smith, 2017). A need has developed in today's schools to support teachers who have been faced with an increasing number of children from divorced families and who have consequently been required to provide additional emotional and academic support in the classroom (Smith, 2017). Galston (1996) found the academic and behavioral problems some children of divorced parents experienced at school required some schools to spend large sums of money on

specialized training for teachers to be better equipped to support these children. Schools today have continued to find this to be true and have allocated money for the specific training of teachers who felt prepared on how to handle the increasing number of issues in the classroom related to the behaviors and emotions of children with divorced parents (Smith, 2017).

After experiencing their parents' divorces, some children have indicated they felt as if their worlds were falling apart (Cashmore & Parkinson, 2016). Wood, Repetti, and Roesch (2004) reported children of divorced parents displayed more academic and behavioral problems than children whose families remained intact. Factors including age and gender may also have impacted how children adjusted to their parents' divorces (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). Potter from the University of Virginia (2010) found elementary children struggled the most after a divorce and immediately began performing poorly on school assignments. Each case was unique and there was no way to predict the outcome of how or why a child may react to the situation (Fagan & Churchill, 2012). However, boys and girls have tended to have different behavioral and academic issues when experiencing parental divorce (Foulkes-Jamison, 2013). The aim of this study and benefit to society and educational fields will be to provide research on whether the gender of the children from divorced situations influenced their academic and emotional behaviors in the classroom and to address the gap in current literature on the topic.

Purpose of the Study

There was an increase in divorced homes, causing academic and behavioral issues with children (Amato & Anthony, 2014). The researcher intends to inspect the negative impact of divorce on the academic performance of kindergarten through eighth grade

students. The purpose of the study was to find if and how parental divorce affected boys and girls behavioral and academic performances in grades kindergarten through eighth, despite conflicting previous research on the topic (Marcussen, Thuen, Bruun, & Hounsgaard, 2015). Nielsen (2012) believed the gender of a child influenced how the child reacted to a parental divorce. Woolfolk (2016) indicated previous research on the subject showed parental divorce was harder on boys than it was on girls, while other researchers found little academic and behavioral differences between the genders of children (Marcussen et al., 2015). This study would help teachers be cognizant of the impact parental divorce had on behaviors and academic performance of children in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

According to Punch and Oancea (2014), a framework was a graphic or narrative representation of a main concept of research. Frameworks have been a vital part of research because they have aided in the development of research (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested a good framework helped the researcher understand more about the research topic. For researchers, providing concise theoretical frameworks have been important to allow the ideas of frameworks to be used (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The theoretical framework of this study revolved around Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, in addition to Erikson's eight ages of man and Bronfenbrenner's stages of development.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow (1954) claimed humans have five basic needs to be met: (a) physiological, (b) safety and security, (c) belongingness and love, (d) self-esteem, and (e) self-actualization. In order for individuals to maximize their full

potentials, these needs outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs must be met (Schunk, 2016). According to Burleson and Thoron (2014), if students had challenging home lives, they more often had trouble focusing on learning, because of a sense of insecurity. Maslow (1943) determined issues, such as divorce, were terrifying to children due to fear of losing love causing them not to have these needs met. Additionally, injustice, unfairness, or inconsistency in parenting styles made a child feel anxious (Maslow, 1943). Thus, this was a vital part of the framework for this study.

Erikson's Eight Ages of Man. Another theorist, Erikson, a psychologist and psychoanalyst, believed humans' needs must be met in order for individuals to properly develop (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Erikson developed the theory, "Eight Ages of Man," which broke down an individuals' life spans into eight stages: (a) birth to 18 months, (b) 18 months to three years, (c) three to five years, (d) six to 12 years, (e) 12 to 18 years, (f) 18 to 35 years, (g) 35 to 65 years, and (h) 65 years to death (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Mooney (2018) wrote individuals' personality strengths and weaknesses were established in the personal development made in each stage of life. Mooney (2013) noted each stage in life affected one another. Some children from divorced homes had a hard time developing properly in each stage due to the stress parental divorce caused on the child (Mundahl, 2014). Mundahl (2014) wrote the impact on children who were experiencing parents' divorces often were influenced based upon the children's stages of life at the time of the divorce.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Russian developmental psychologist, Bronfenbrenner, expanded Erikson's theory (Oswalt, 2015). Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory, which described how outside

factors affected the growth of a child (Oswalt, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1994) created five small systems within the big ecosystem: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem. The smallest and most personal system was the microsystem extending to the chronosystem (Oswalt, 2015). The child's personal development and growth depended on the systems working together over a lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Parental divorce could impact these systems within a child's life, causing the child to not fully develop or to receive the complete human needs (Woolfolk, 2016).

Research Questions/Hypothesis

The researcher outlined the following questions in order to investigate:

1. Do teachers perceive there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth grade from a divorced situation based on the student's gender?

2. How does the gender of a child from a divorce situation affect his/her behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting?

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study are as follows:

Question 1.

H₁- The gender of a child does affect the teacher's perception of students' behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting.

H₀- The gender of a child does not affect the teacher's perception of behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting.

Question 2.

H₁- Boys will demonstrate more negative behavioral and academic struggles in grades kindergarten through eighth than girls will. There will be a distinct difference in the negative impacts between boys and girls.

H₀- Boys will not demonstrate more negative behavioral and academic struggles in grades kindergarten through eighth than boys will. There will not be a distinct difference in the negative impacts between boys and girls.

Statement of the Problem

A vast amount of previous research on divorce and impact on children has indicated children go through tremendous amounts of stress during and following these transitions in their families (Mullineaux & Karinch, 2016; Rodman, 2015). These children have been impacted greatly by the lack of stability in their lives during the divorce process (Rodman, 2015). This inconsistency in the home life setting likely made tremendous impacts on many students' academic achievement rates in school as well (Rodman, 2016). Even though divorce was more predominant in American society, there was contradicting literature available on the impact children's gender made on behaviors and academics (Marcussen et al., 2015). With 40% of the children in American classrooms experiencing parental divorces in their childhoods, it has become pertinent to determine the negative effects it could cause at school (Rodman, 2016). Additional research related to students experiencing divorce has become poignant due to the growing numbers of students dealing with divorce issues, and the fact many school district administrators have taken pride and been committed to meeting all needs of the children being served (Odenweller, 2014). Odenweller (2014) suggested children from divorced

families may require multiple and different coping skills at school, which may not be typical of children in the classroom whose parents were not divorced. As many children in schools today face divorce and other issues at home, it has become imperative for these children to receive the proper support they require (Odenweller, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

Surveying teachers on their perceptions of the impact divorce had on students was a limitation within itself due to the threat of bias occurring on the topic. The researcher had to be cautious and not use personal bias when analyzing the answers to the open-ended questions. The researcher had to be careful to report the data from the open-ended questions as it was presented and not sway the information due to personal experiences. Another limitation within the study was identifying students who have experienced a parental divorce. Teachers without a particular database which identified children from a divorced household had to use what little knowledge they had of the household. Lastly, there became a threat of one-sided answers. The researcher did not have a way to determine if the participants had previous experience working with male and female students who have experienced a parental divorce.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the study, the following terms were defined:

Blended families. A blended family was formed when remarriages occurred, and there was a step-parent, step-sibling, or half-sibling introduced into the family (Kreider & Ellis, 2009).

Co-parenting. Co-parenting was described as two or more individuals sharing the responsibilities of raising a child (McHale & Lindahl, 2011).

Divorce. Divorce has been referred to as a legal termination of marriage (Emery, 2013).

Gender matching. Gender matching was described as the custody arrangement created based on the gender of the oldest child (Faust, Ko, Alexander, & Greenhawt, 2017). The children were placed in the home of parent of a matching gender (Faust et al., 2017).

Joint physical custody. The joint physical custody plan has been determined as a parental care arrangement of the child/children were living with each parent 25 to 50% of the time after a separation or divorce (Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 2014; Steinbach, 2018).

Parenting plan. A parenting plan determined the percentage of time children of separated or divorced parents were legally required to live with each parent (Nielsen, 2015).

Physical custody. Physical custody is described as the right to have a child live with a parent (Zemmelman, 2014).

Relocation. Relocation was described as the official act of moving a child/children away from the home or community of one parent to a location some distance from the other parent (Cashmore & Parkinson, 2016).

Shared custody. Shared custody was defined as neither household being the primary residence for the child (Nielsen, 2015). In shared custody, the parents shared legal guardianship over the child (Nielsen, 2015).

Sole custody. Sole custody was a term used to describe when a child/children lived with a parent 90% of the time (Nielsen, 2015). Sole custody was based on a legal decision made by the court system (Nielsen, 2015).

Stepparent. A stepparent was defined as an adult who had assumed parenting responsibilities and whose partner had at least one child from a previous relationship (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

Summary

In Chapter One, the researcher provided the foundation of the study regarding the growing problem of divorce faced by students and its impact on school performance and behaviors, including two research questions which will guide the direction of the study. The purpose of the study was to determine how the gender of a child from divorce impacts academics and emotional/classroom behaviors of kindergarten through eighth graders at school. The researcher described the theoretical framework based on Maslow's, Erikson's, and Bronfenbrenner's studies, as well as key terms applicable to the study. Throughout Chapter Two, the researcher will inspect background information on the main topics and conduct a review of the literature on divorce and gender issues to provide a better understanding of the topic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Divorce rates in the United States have been one of the highest in the world (Woolfolk, 2017). Between 40% to 50% of first marriages which took place in the 1990's ended in divorce, with a higher percentage for second or third marriages (Woolfolk, 2017). More than half of divorced couples claimed to have a minor child from the marriage (Amato, 2000). This phenomenon has resulted in more than one million children in the United States experiencing a parental divorce in a year's time span (Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Palmarsdottir, 2015). Only one out of four of those children lived with one parent, mainly the mother (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2013).

The divorce process was a stressful time period for the children involved (Woolfolk, 2017). Parental divorce impacted the children involved in a variety of ways, such as behaviorally and academically (Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Amato, 2012). There are various disciplines of studies on the effect of parental divorce on children since the mid-1960s (Amato & Anthony, 2014). More often than not, children from divorced families were compared to children from continuously married nuclear families using large national datasets (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). Researchers, such as Hetherington and Kelly (2002) and Amato (2012), reviewed and developed literature based on the impact of parental divorce. For the most part, parental divorce had a negative impact on a child's life (Amato, 2012).

Throughout this chapter, the theoretical framework will be inspected and connected to the available research on children of divorced situations. Examining literature showed the impact of divorce on students' behavior and academic performance. The purpose of this study was to determine if and how the parental divorce affected or

impacted the gender of children, in kindergarten through eighth grades. Literature about divorce has contradicted information on how the parental divorce impacted each gender. Literature was reviewed in relation to divorce and its impact on children.

Theoretical Framework

A deep desire has fueled many human beings to achieve their goals (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). By meeting goals, human needs were met (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). Maslow (1943) claimed human actions were directed by goal attainment rather than previous conditioning theories. Maslow (1943) established Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which was a motivational theory in psychology containing a pyramid of five levels: (a) physiological, (b) safety and security, (c) love and belonging, (d) self-esteem, and (e) self-actualization (McLeod, 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2017). Each level depended on the person's satisfaction of the previous level of the pyramid (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and sleep, must be satisfied before further development took place (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). Children have been known to be intrinsically motivated (Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). When children felt their needs were met, they performed better in school, stayed focused, and showed off creative skills (Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). If physiological needs were not obtained, children's cognitive needs were not met (McLeod, 2017). When potentially disruptive life events, such as divorce occurred, there was a hindrance to a child's needs being met (McLeod, 2017). For some children, their sense of belonging was threatened during and after a parental divorce (Emery, 2016). In order to perform and progress academically, these students must have felt physically and emotionally safe, as well as valued (McLeod, 2017).

Erikson's Eight Ages of Man Theory. Much like Maslow, theorist Erikson also believed in the requirement of human needs being met before a person could develop appropriately (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Erikson developed the Eight Ages of Man Theory, in which he broke down a person's life-span into stages: (a) birth to 18 months, (b) 18 months to three years, (c) three to five years, (d) six to 12 years, (e) 12 to 18 years, (f) 18 to 35 years, (g) 35 to 65, and (h) 65 to death (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Mooney, 2013). As an individual passed through each stage of life, personality strengths or weaknesses were formed based on the development made in each stage (Berzoff, Flanagan, Hertz, 2016); thus, Erikson felt each stage strongly influenced one another (Mooney, 2013). In his opinion, Erikson believed the early childhood years were crucial in children's development of trust, initiative, and autonomy (Mooney, 2013). In this study, only the first five stages of Erikson's Theory will be discussed.

The first stage was considered trust versus mistrust (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Throughout the first year of life, children developed a sense of trust in themselves and those around them (Mooney, 2013). When trust was formed, the attachment, or special bond, was created with individuals, such as parents (Mooney, 2013). If a child did not experience trust, he or she may have developed insecurities and mistrust, which sometimes has led to wariness and uncertainty for children (Mundahl, 2014; Deci & Ryan, 2017). During these instances, the child was incapable of developing higher levels of social functioning (Mooney, 2013). It was imperative for divorced parents to continue to provide the basic needs for children at this age, in order to ensure the development of healthy relationships was established (Mundahl, 2014).

Erikson's Second Stage, Autonomy versus Shame, focused on children from birth to three years old (Deci & Ryan, 2017). At this stage, the developmental task was for children to acquire independence without shame or doubt (Mooney, 2013). Deci and Ryan (2017) wrote children at this stage need to be allowed to have independence or feelings of vulnerability and hate tends to be created between parent and child. Another negative effect which occurred at this stage was continual self-doubt for many children, such as feeling the divorce was their faults or they were incapable of succeeding in school (Mooney, 2013). Parents from divorced backgrounds were advised to set appropriate limits for children asserting free will (Mundahl, 2014).

In the third stage, Initiative versus Guilt, children three to five years old experienced a desire to mimic the adults around them (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Children tended to express this through creative play, such as making up stories with dolls such as Barbie and Ken (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Through this copying, children developed a sense of personal responsibility and purpose (Mundahl, 2014). Those children who did not develop appropriately in this stage tended to be anxious, irresponsible, and guilt-ridden (Mundahl, 2014). For the children's best interest, Erikson stated, parents should focus on their children's gains and not mistakes (as cited in Mooney, 2013). Children from divorced homes who did not develop as they should have tended to blame themselves for their parents' divorce (Mundahl, 2014).

The fourth and fifth stages, Industry versus Inferiority and Identity versus Role Confusion, occurred when individuals learned how the world worked around them (Mundahl, 2014). Erikson claimed these stages were critical for children to develop long-lasting relationships (Mundahl, 2014). Unresolved feelings of inadequacy from

previous stages resulted in severe problems on many children's self-esteem and ability to find personal identities (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Children from divorced homes needed parents to encourage positive relationships among peers, in order to grow through these stages (Mundahl, 2014). These positive relationships among peers helped the children feel a sense of belonging (Mundahl, 2014).

Parental divorce had the potential to be hard on everyone in the family unit (Wagoner & Diamond, 2016). However, adults possessed more control over the situation than the children (Mundahl, 2014). Divorce was shown to have had a drastic effect on a child's personal development (Weldon, 2016). The impact of the personal experiences created from the divorce was based on the developmental stage the children were in when the divorces occurred (Mundahl, 2014). Mundahl (2014) wrote, following divorce, many children had suffered an identity crisis needing to know who they were in the family structure and parental divorce negatively impacted children's personal growth. When parents were divorcing, the children were put in adult situations, both emotionally and possibly physically (Mundahl, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner, a Russian born American developmental psychologist, expanded on Erikson's theory through the development of the ecological systems theory (Oswalt, 2015). The ecological systems theory, like Erickson's, explained how external factors affected the development and growth of a child (Oswalt, 2015). The physical and social realms developed were considered ecosystems since they constantly interacted and influenced one another (Woolfolk, 2016). Bronfenbrenner (1994) broke down those ecosystems into five smaller systems: a) microsystem, b) mesosystem, c) exosystem, d) macrosystem, and e)

chronosystems. Bronfenbrenner (1994) illustrated the systems as “a set of Russian dolls. Moving from the innermost level to the outside” (p. 39). The child’s development depended on how all the systems worked together over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The first developmental stage of this theory was the microsystem, or the small intimate environment around an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Oswalt, 2015). The microsystem contained the child’s immediate friends, family, and activities impacting the child’s daily life (Woolfolk, 2016). These groups drastically impacted the growth of children (Oswalt, 2015). When relationships were positive and encouraging, the child had a better chance of growing appropriately (Oswalt, 2015). However, relationships were reciprocal, and the way the child responded to individuals affected how they were treated (Oswalt, 2015; Woolfolk, 2016).

The next system, the mesosystem, contained linking of two or more microsystems working together for the sake of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Slesnick et al. (2007) mentioned, “An individual’s relationship in every setting is impacted by relationships in other settings in the individual’s life,” (p. 1238). Slesnick (2007) related a mesosystem to the analogy of the child being dragged across microsystems. The way other individuals communicated with one another affected the child (Woolfolk, 2017).

After the mesosystem, the next layer was the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The exosystem contained the social settings, which indirectly affected the child (Woolfolk, 2017). For example, if a parent lost a job, the child was indirectly impacted due to the financial strain on the household (Woolfolk, 2017). On the opposite side of the spectrum, if a parent received a promotion or raise, the child was impacted in a positive manner (Oswalt, 2015). Epstein (1983) completed research on this system, claiming a

developmental impact occurred with the child due to the two-way communication and involvement in decision making between teachers and parents. When such participation took place with both parties, the children performed better in school and developed more independence (Epstein, 1983).

Bronfenbrenner (1994) illustrated the following system as a blueprint for society. The macrosystem consisted of the cultural, societal, and educational beliefs impacting the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Freedoms given by the government such as religious beliefs fell into the macrosystem as well (Oswalt, 2015). Like the previous systems, the macrosystem affected the child negatively and positively (Oswalt, 2015). Lastly, Bronfenbrenner (1994) stated, the final system which encompassed all the other systems was the chronosystem. The chronosystem was described as the impacts of the a (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, and (d) macrosystem working together over a period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The ripple effects of divorce caused disruptions to the child (Berk, 2012). Divorce had the ability to impact a child's subsystems through distress and instability (Oswalt, 2015; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). For example, an argument between divorced parents (one microsystem) could have affected school (another microsystem), causing the child to withdraw (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). An event such as a divorce, could entirely disrupt all of a child's subsystems and not fulfill human needs (Woolfolk, 2016).

Brief History of Divorce

Divorce has dated back to before the 16th century in Europe (Borgen, 2010). At this time divorcing a spouse was extremely difficult and was only allowed when signs of abuse, desertion, and/or adultery were 100% proven (Borgen, 2010). However, in the

United States before 1840, less than half the states accepted spousal abuse as a justifiable reason for marital divorce (Borgen, 2010). In the 18th century, these actions were proof spouses did not live up to their roles in the marital contracts (Adams & Coltrane, 2006). During the time period of 1880 to 1890, a 70% increase in divorce rates occurred (Coontz, 2005).

By the 1920s, spouses were expecting more out of a marriage than in the past (Borgen, 2010). Individuals viewed marriage as a life-long friendship wanting true love, sexual intimacy, and companionship (Borgen, 2010). With these greater hopes of what marriages should have been, disappointments from spouses began occurring, leading into a new profession of marriage counselors (Borgen, 2010). Due to the Great Depression in the 1930s, some couples were unable to afford divorces causing the divorce rates to decrease and desertion rates to increase (Borgen, 2010). Following the Great Depression, World War II took place, which created another major shift in divorce history (Coontz, 2006). By the end of the war in 1945, the divorce rates spiked to one out of every three marriages ending in divorce (Coontz, 2006). It was undocumented why the spike arose, but historians speculated families were financially better off (Coontz, 2006).

After two intense decades of war and economic hardships, the United States shifted to more family-focused households (Borgen, 2010). The 1950s were known as the era of the family (Borgen, 2010). By 1958, marriage rates increased, while divorce rates were cut in half (Borgen, 2010). This sense of family focus ended quickly when the state of California created a new statute in 1969 (Polomeno, 2007). The court systems in California established a no-fault divorce clause, making it extremely easy for a marital divorce to occur (Polomeno, 2007). The clause allowed couples to divorce without the

previous terms of abuse, desertion, or adultery to have taken place; which created a 50% increase in divorce rates (Polomeno, 2007).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, divorce rates doubled (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Researchers believed this to be true because of several factors which took place in the 1970s (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). During this period, the sexual revolution, the abolition of laws restricting marriage between races, the advancement of the women's labor for movement, and the women's liberation movement were all happening (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). This spike in divorce rates initiated concern for the children involved in a divorce (Borgen, 2010). Researchers started the investigation of the negative impact parental divorce had on children when compared to those children from intact families (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007).

Effects of Parental Divorce

One of the most beneficial methods for collecting data on the effects of divorce on children was through child fixed effect models (Amato, Patterson, & Beattie, 2015; McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider, 2013). However, studies on this topic have rendered contradicting results (Amato & Anthony, 2015). Amato and Anthony (2014) completed a study on the effects of parental divorce on children, using fixed effects models. The researchers believed the models provided strong evidence on whether divorce influenced children or not, which was typically impossible to observe due to time constraints (Amato & Anthony, 2014). Educators around the nation employed two large national data sets, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study's Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) and the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) (Amato & Anthony, 2014). "Longitudinal studies make it possible to compare children before and after parental

divorce, assuming that identical child outcomes are available at both times,” explained Amato and Anthony (2014, p. 370). Longitudinal studies provided proof a portion of the negative problems associated with parental divorce were present before the divorce took place (Sun & Li, 2011). In an approach never previously used in documenting literature on divorce, Amato and Anthony (2014) inspected the pre- and post-divorce scores of the children from divorce compared to the standard error of measurement on state assessments, showing a percentage of children who declined or even improved in academic and interpersonal scores.

Results from Amato and Anthony’s (2014) research included a decline in reading and math scores, interpersonal skills, and self-control, while there was an increase in internalizing and externalizing problems (see Table 1). Through their investigations, Amato and Anthony (2014) discovered divorce and declines in children’s achievement and adjustment were related. Previous research studies using child fixed effects models, such as Cherlin et al. (1998), Cooper et al. (2011), and Hao and Xie (2002), were consistent with Amato and Anthony’s (2014) study. However, the results contradicted with Foster and Kalil (2007) and Burnett and Farkas’s (2009) research who claimed divorce had little impact on children’s academics. Overall, the vast amount of evidence from the models supported the idea of parental divorce having a negative effect on children (Amato & Anthony, 2014).

Table 1

Results from Research Testing

	Decreased	Increased	Stayed the Same
Reading Scores	24%	19%	57%
Math Scores	22%	16%	62%
Interpersonal Scores	26%	19%	55%
Internalized Problems	10%	24%	66%

Note. Results from Amato and Anthony's (2014) research project. Data collected from two national data sets: The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) and the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) (Amato & Anthony, 2014).

Outside of the fixed models, the findings of other researchers suggested children of divorced situations exhibited more conduct, social, and emotional problems, along with lower achievement on academic testing when compared to children from intact families (Amato, 2012). The experience also has resulted in long-term emotional problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD (APA, 2002). However, children adjusted more easily if their standards of living did not decline after the parental divorce (Amato, 2012). In multiple studies, Amato (2012) found children thrived on stability and coped better when they did not have to move to new schools, towns, or change lifestyles, which occurred many times preceding parental divorces.

Impacting Factors of Divorce on Children

According to Amato (2001) parental divorce has had multiple negative impacts on children, such as emotional, behavioral, and academic disturbances. When compared to children with two parents who were continuously married without separation, children from divorced homes displayed lower scores on achievement, adjustment, and well-being (Kelly & Emery, 2003; Amato 2001). These same children also were more anti-social in

their interactions with others (Strohschein, 2005), had more aggressive tendencies (Osborne & McLanahan, 2007), and cognitively achieved lower (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). However, the severity may have been influenced by a variety of factors (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). Characteristics of the child, situational characteristics, and custodial issues all played a part on the impact divorce had on a child (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015).

Characteristics of the child. Divorce was studied widely in the United States (Kleinsorge & Covitz, 2012). Research has disclosed various factors played a role in how the child adjusted to a parental divorce (Kleinsorge & Covitz, 2012; Kapinus, 2004). A child's gender and age played a role in how the child adjusted after the parental divorce (Lamb, 1986). Some of the available research on this topic was contradicting on this issue (Marcussen et al., 2015). With these gaps in the literature, there is a need to have more current data on how the characteristics, especially gender of a child, impacted the academics and the way a child coped following a parental divorce (Marcussen et al., 2015).

Issues related to gender. Previous research on divorce literature and responses to parent and teacher surveys to parental divorce based on gender sometimes have contradicted one another (Marcussen et al., 2015). Kirk (2002) claimed there were no noticeable differences in statistics between children of different genders in his study of the effects of parental divorce on children. Marcussen et al. (2015) noted, some studies showed little differences in the gender of a child, while others spoke of children of different genders displaying differing negative behaviors. Kapinus (2004) indicated literature depicted girls and boys reacted differently to parental divorce. Research

supported boys and girl reacted differently to parental divorce (Kapinus, 2004). Kapinus (2004) also mentioned the possibility the gender of the parents whom the child resided with may also have impacted how the child responded to parental divorce (Kapinus, 2004). This research study was designed to add to the literature surrounding the gender-related impacts of parental divorce (Kapinus, 2004; Marcussen et al., 2015).

The little research available on the role the gender of the children played on their respective effect from a parental divorce was consistent stating both genders displayed lower levels of self-esteem, high dropout rates, and lower academic scores compared to those within two-parent households (Marcussen et al., 2015). While girls were more open to talk about their fears stemming from the divorce, many times more often boys turned inward and avoided discussions related to the divorce (Marcussen et al., 2015). Grubb and Long (2014) backed this up by stating girls adapted easier to parental divorce than boys. In contrast to this, Bloem (2017) and Foulkes-Jamison (2009) found compared to boys who experienced parental divorce, girls showed more signs of depression, anxiety, and withdrawal. Girls from divorced situations were more likely to become sexually active at a younger age than boys or girls who had not gone through a parental divorce (Bloem, 2017). While girls acted out sexually, boys rebelled at school (Bloem, 2017). When parents displayed negativity towards one another, girls were more likely to develop eating disorders from the stress (Salafia, 2014). In a school setting which compared children from divorced families to children from intact families, boys from a divorced family displayed more physically aggressive, disobedient behaviors (Bloem, 2017; Foulkes-Jamison, 2009).

The gender of a child not only impacted how the child reacted to the divorce, but also subsequent custody arrangements (Nielsen, 2012). Researchers found boys were more likely than girls to live in a shared parenting arrangement (Nielsen, 2012). A larger number of boys living in a shared arrangement could have been due to the fact fathers felt more comfortable raising boys, while mothers were not as confident in this role (McIntosh et al., 2010). As a result of this scenario, sons and fathers had a closer bond than sons with mothers or fathers with daughters (Nielsen, 2012). During the process of the divorce and custody trials, some girls may have felt placed in the middle of parental fights, causing a decline in relationships, mainly with the fathers (Nielsen, 2011, 2015, in press). However, it was found girls benefited more than boys when living with their father at least 35% of the time (Nielsen, 2015).

Issues related to age. Many studies on divorce examined the age of children when the divorce occurred (Grubb & Long, 2014). A large majority of researchers felt the age of a child when the divorce occurred played a role in how children adapted to divorce of their parents (Bloem, 2017; Grubb & Long, 2014). Oliver (2013) agreed children's reaction to the parents varied by age. Erikson's research encouraged divorced parents to be aware of the developmental stage their children were in, because their personal needs changed over time (Mundahl, 2014). Due to their respective placement in the developmental stages, children had various perceptions and responses to a parental divorce (Gross, 2017; Weldon, 2016).

Parental divorce also drastically affected children's personal growth and development (Weldon, 2016). Kirk (2002) found younger children who experienced a parental divorce adjusted better than middle school-aged children. Some researchers

found the risk of negative behaviors escalated with older children (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). However, Amato (2001) noted, the child's adjustment to divorce was better as the child aged. Better adjustment was believed to be due to the maturation and coping skills the child possessed (Grubb & Long, 2014; Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). With an inconsistency in previous divorce literature, it was difficult to find the age a child was most vulnerable to parental divorce (Weldon, 2016).

Pre-school to elementary school. Due to the lack of personal growth in the developmental stages, some children under the age of 10 did not know how to cope with a parental divorce (Grubb & Long, 2014; Gross, 2017). At this age, Foulkes-Jamison (2009) cautioned, many children were egocentric and blamed themselves for parental divorce (Gross, 2017; Bloem, 2017). During this period, some children also believed they could help reconnect the parents' marriages (Bloem, 2017). After some children realized this would not transpire, many times the behavioral outbursts, aggression, vulnerability, and attention seeking tendencies began (Bloem, 2017; Gross, 2017; Pickar, 2003). Physical manifestations, including a) bed wetting, b) headaches, c) depression, d) anxiety, e) stomach pains, and f) tiredness occurred at this stage due to stress put on the child (Bloem, 2017; Pickar, 2003).

Middle to high school. Nelson (2009) deemed, "Adolescents are in a crucial time for cognitive psychosocial and emotional transformation" (p. 3). Parental divorce made this transformational period more difficult on many adolescents (Hines, 2009). Often tension and conflicts took place because adolescents were made a third party of the divorce (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). Putting the child in the middle of the situation caused feelings of betrayal and mistrust, leading to a sense of independence

away from the family (Bloem, 2017). Parker (2017) explained children at this stage required more psychological help than any children from an intact family as a result of these feelings.

Gross (2017) discovered teachers often noted parental divorce negatively impacted students' education during this age. Students demonstrated more aggressive behaviors than those from intact families (Gross, 2017). When a divorce happened during this pre-adolescent and adolescent stage, some students stopped completing work in the classroom (Gross, 2017). As grades plummeted, these students were twice as likely to drop out of school than their peers (Gross, 2017).

Situational characteristics. Based on previous research by American College of Pediatricians (2014), when assessing the impact of divorce on children and their parents, researchers found it was imperative to consider all the factors before judging an outcome. Each family and divorce situation was unique and had situational characteristics which impacted the outcome of the influence of divorce (American College of Pediatricians, 2014). Situational characteristics to review the impact of divorce were the family structure, parental conflict, and custodial arrangements (American College of Pediatricians, 2014).

Effects of family structure. Historically, the traditional American family included a mother and father (Waldfogel, Craigie, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). This picture-perfect family has become less common in today's society (Waldfogel et al., 2010). Single parents, remarriages, and stepfamilies became the new norm in society (Kennedy & Fitch, 2012). Structuring of the family has played a vital role in children's emotional

health and well-being (Salafia, 2014). With this said, not all children have reacted the same way to the new family structure (Amato, 2012).

Single-parent households. Compared to historical views of the family structure, single-parent households no longer have been considered abnormal (Melhado, 2017). Raising children in a single-parent household has claimed to be extremely difficult due to the custodial parent juggling multiple obligations (Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). The custodial parents' obligations have included managing the household, meeting children's needs, and being financial providers (Umberson et al., 2010; Ostberg & Hogeball, 2013). While dealing with those stressors, Melhado (2017) suggested, it was vital parents put the children's needs above their own. However, this was challenging since some single parents have been unavailable due to constantly working (*Secure Teen*, 2016).

When compared to children living in two-parent households, children in single-parent households sometimes experienced lower standards of living (Amato, Patterson, & Beattie, 2015). Households ran by single parents have frequently been at risk for poverty (Kunz, 2015). Living in poverty situations caused stress to the children (Kunz, 2015). Knowing they lived in lower economic status than peers, sometimes these children often displayed lower self-esteem, increased violent episodes, and increased anger (Kunz, 2015). Consequently, the instability caused children to perform more poorly in school than their counterparts (Amato et al., 2015).

Living in a single-parent household impacted children's social behaviors and academic achievement as well (Kunz, 2015). Some children tended to feel abandoned by the parent, not in the home (Kunz, 2015). The feeling of abandonment led to children

having a difficult time socializing with others (Kunz, 2015). Kunz (2015) noted children in single parent homes who had contacted and received emotional support from their fathers compared to those who did not performed better in school. Overall, also children from single-parent households performed lower on achievement tests than children in two-parent households (Brown, 2010).

Recently, there was a drastic spike in the number of single-parent households in the United States (Golombok, Zadeh, Imrie, Smith, & Freeman, 2016). According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), Choi and Pyun (2014), and Kunz (2015), approximately 30% of homes with children were run by single-parents, mainly single mothers. In the 1970s this percent of children under the age of 18 was less than 10% (Golombok et al., 2016). Single mother households were formed in multiple ways, but divorce was the most common reason for the student living with a mother without a spouse (Golombok et al., 2016). After a parental divorce has occurred, most children primarily resided with the mother (Rathus, 2013).

Many researchers believed the arrangement of children residing with the mother was beneficial for the children because they required maternal support (Keown & Palmer, 2014). However, research disputed it was rare to see stable, single mother households (McLanahan et al., 2013). A lack of stability was due to situational poverty after a divorce took place (Payne, 2013; Amato, Patterson, & Beattie, 2015). Thus, children no longer had the strong maternal involvement and guidance, because many times the mothers were working to properly provide for the family (Rathus, 2013; Kunz, 2015). The lack of maternal involvement typically was necessary to make up for the lack of financial support from the fathers (Rathus, 2013; Kunz, 2015). Research on single

mother homes was of new interest to researchers to determine how these situations impacted children's wellbeing and possibly contributed to psychological problems, if any (Golombok, 2015).

In regards to emotional support Fagan (1999) found many divorced mothers had a hard time providing emotional support compared to non-divorced moms. The lack of emotional support mixed with less affection and communication resulted in inconsistent measures of discipline (Nelson, 2009). In some scenarios, in order to keep the child under wraps and on their side, many mothers disclosed private, negative information about the father (Keynon et al., 2008). Negative remarks towards the father caused the children to put blame on him and show the mother more support (Keynon et al., 2008).

Due to stereotypes, single fathers have been under-researched (Shirwell & Seepersad, 2016; Rochlen, McKelley, & Whitaker, 2010). Society has frequently labeled single fathers as individuals running away from personal responsibilities (Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013; Melhado, 2017). This stereotype stemmed from the copious amount of single mother research highlighting only the positives of children living with single mothers (Flood, 2010). Previous researchers neglected the thought of single fathers having any custody of children following a divorce (Greif, 1994, Haaz, Kneavel, & Browning, 2014). Recently, there was a shift in research with the increase of single fathers gaining custody of their children (Bronte-Tinkew, Scott, & Lilja, 2010).

A finding of this research was there was a rise in the population of males found to be single fathers (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Jackson, Preston, & Thomas, 2013). Livingston (2013) claimed 8% of households in the United States containing minor children were led by single fathers. According to Cook (2014), this equaled to 15% of

the single-parent population being male. This percentage has tripled since 1960 (Greif, 1994; Coles, 2015). Growth in these percentages has resulted in researchers focusing more on single fathers (DeJean, McGeorge, & Carlson, 2013).

Absence of the father. Following a divorce, often a change has occurred between the relationship of the father and child. Compared to fathers who were currently married, divorced fathers had less contact and daily involvement with their children (Albertini & Garriga, 2011; Daatland, 2007). Recent studies have determined divorce had negative long-term consequences for the father and child relationship (Kalmijn, 2015). The most consistent consequence in all studies was the lower quality of relationships children had with the non-residential fathers (Lansford, 2009). According to research completed by Kalmijn (2015), the tension in relationships with fathers was more drastic with boys than girls. Along with this, other family structures became unstable due to the lack of the father presence (Tach, 2012).

In the United States, approximately 78% of men have been found to remarry after a divorce (Schoen & Standish, 2001). Even though a new partner provided a source of support, remarriage had the potential to be more of a hindrance than a blessing when dealing with the father and child relationship. Kalmijn (2015) reported many fathers shifted their time and energy toward their new family after remarriage. However, this could have been the result of restrictions provided in the divorce settlement, such as limited visitation time with the children. Laplante and Le Bourdais (2007) found noncustodial fathers became less involved in their children's daily lives following the divorce settlement. The strain in the relationship became apparent if the father had children with his new wife (Manning & Smock, 1999).

With the absence of the biological father, children began displaying negative effects toward social-emotional development (McLanahan et al., 2013). There was strong proof this often created problems for the child during adolescence, such as smoking and sexual activity at a young age (McLanahan et al., 2013). Although there have been negative impacts on children's behavior and emotions from the absence of a father in the home, there was little evidence to support this absence has impacted children's cognitive ability (McLanahan et al., 2013). Kunz (2015) contradicted this statement by claiming the absence of a father resulted in children performing poorly in school.

Remarriage. Between 31% and 40% of United States marriages in 2009 were remarriages (Lamidi & Cruz, 2014; Lewis & Kreider, 2015); this percentage has tripled since 1969 (Livingston, 2014). On an average, one parent remarried within less than four years preceding a divorce (Lewis & Kreider, 2015). Men remarried at a higher rate than women (Kredl & Hubatkova, 2017); however, this was steadily decreasing (Kredl & Hubatkova, 2017). This decline was true partly to remarriage rates decreasing as couples chose to cohabitate as an alternative to marriage (Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013; Kredl & Hubatkova, 2017). Kennedy and Fitch (2012) found roughly 26% of cohabiting households had children living within it from a previous relationship.

It was imperative following a divorce for parents not to introduce the children to their new partners at an early stage (Kennedy & Fitch, 2012). The children required time to adjust to their parents' divorces following the finalization of the event, and an early introduction to new partners caused hindrances in the family (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Hetherington (2014) compared the rates of remarriages for whites versus blacks after divorce. While 58% of white individuals remarried following a divorce, only 37% of

black individuals remarried, equaling to two out of every five white children not living with both biological parents by the age of 16, but black children were twice as likely not to live with both biological parents (Hetherington, 2014).

A new marriage did not always stabilize the family structure for the children involved. Approximately one-third of children whose custodial parents remarried created another major disruption in their lives by bringing in a new person (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). With new individuals in their lives, children felt fear of losing a parents' love, at times causing a competitive mentality with the new partner (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2013). Ashford et al. (2013) also stated it could be hard for children to form a new relationship and accept another authoritarian figure.

Stepfamilies. Historically, stepfamilies have always existed (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). They were typically created after the death of a spouse and went unnoticed, until roughly 50 years ago (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Stepparents were viewed as replacements or substitutes of a parent after their death, rather than an addition of a new family member (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015). More recently, stepfamilies have been created through divorce. According to Ganong and Coleman (2017), since stepfamilies have been structurally more complex than the nuclear family, it automatically created great challenges. Compared to two-parent families, stepfamilies were less stable and cooperative (Jensen, Shafer, & Holmes, 2015). A rocky stepfamily could be due to the fact people entering into such situation were not prepared for the uniqueness of the situation (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

Living in a blended family was known to reduce the well-being of all children involved (McLanahan et al., 2013). Adler-Baeder (2006) noted many children were at a

greater risk of being physically and/or sexually abused by a stepparent. Counter to this finding, Marsiglio (2004) found most stepparents treated their step kids as if they were their children.

Parental conflict. Although the process of a parental divorce caused copious amounts of stress on the children involved, in some cases it was the best situation for the children (Parker, 2017). In these instances, adults brought risky traits, such as problematic personality issues, poor relationship skills, and abuse into a marriage (Amato, 2012). Parker (2017) pointed out divorce was the best answer for children in domestic abuse or other harmful behavioral home life situations. Salfia (2014) indicated parental conflict led to maladjustment in children. Parental divorce was known to impact children in a damaging way; however, cross-sectional studies proved negative outcomes appeared before the divorce occurred due to children experiencing high levels of marital conflict (Amato & Anthony, 2014). Intense parental fighting was linked to depressions, anxiety, high blood pressure, and academic struggles in children (Troxel & Holt-Lunstad, 2013). In such cases, children fared better after parents went through the divorce process (Amato & Anthony, 2014).

Custodial arrangements. Divorce was difficult for everyone involved, but the custody arrangement drastically impacted the children's lives (Nielsen, 2015; Fagan & Churchill, 2012). In the United States, the most complex and controversial issue regarding family law was determining the custodial arrangement for children following their parents' divorce (Nielsen, 2015). The courts tried to determine the percentage of time spent with each parent which would be beneficial for the children involved (Nielsen, 2015). Various custodial arrangements have developed over time, including gender

matching, joint, and sole custody (Cancian et al., 2014). Cancian et al. (2014) stated, “Although there is an increasing trend toward joint or shared parental custody, sole maternal custody remains the most common custody arrangement in the United States” (p.2). However, before the era of the court systems favoring mothers in custody hearings, judges frequently awarded fathers’ custody of male children (Kelly, 1994). Fox and Kelly (1995) pointed out previous research on custody arrangements showed fathers felt more comfortable raising male children than females, so they were more often granted more custody of boys.

Gender matching. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a study on gender matching was completed in Texas called the Texas Custody Research Project (Warshak, 1986, 1992). Data from this research alluded children living with a parent of the opposite gender were not as well adjusted to a parental divorce as those living with a parent of the same gender (Santrok & Warshak, 1979). Those children who were placed in a gender-matched home post-divorce appeared more mature, cooperative, and had higher self-esteem (Faust, Ko, Alexander, & Greenhawt, 2017). Gender matching had a positive impact on the parent-child relationship after the divorce took place (Booth & Amato, 1994). Evolving from this study came the same sex tradition of custody assignments (Faust et al., 2017). This theory claimed children displayed more advanced psychosocial and social outcomes when residing with a parent of the same sex, opposed to those living with a parent of the opposite sex (Pike, 2000).

Also stemming from the Texas Custody Research Project (Warshak, 1986, 1992) came a study on child custody completed by Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, and Dornbusch (1993). Their study was created to determine the factors which impacted the

adjustment parental divorce had on children (Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, and Dornbusch, 1993). In order to complete the study, children were sorted into three custody groups: mother, father, and dual residency (Faust et al., 2017). Although none of the custody arrangements showed a significant impact on boys; girls provided a considerable amount of data (Faust et al., 2017). Girls living with their mothers had better grades, put forth more effort, and adjusted better than girls who lived with their fathers (Maccoby et al., 1993).

Based on prior literature, the court system has ideally preferred parent-child gender matching when making custodial arrangements (Faust et al., 2017). Powell and Downey (1997) specified gender matching showed the children how to carry out the role of their gender. Those children living with the opposite sex parent had less opportunity to identify with the same gender parent (Powell & Downey, 1997). Researchers, Fox and Kelly (1995), found when the child was a male, the odds of a father being granted custody were more favorable. Consequently, when the child was a female, the fathers rarely gained custody (Fox & Kelly, 1995). The idea of gender matching during a custodial case may have been established due to the research in the 80s, which claimed gender impacted parent-child interactions (Lamb, 1986). Very little up-to-date research was completed addressing the benefits of parent-child gender matching custodial arrangements and whether the idea is still supported in courts today (Faust et al., 2017).

Shared custody. The new preferred custodial arrangement was shared custody (Nielsen, 2015). Shared or joint custody was defined as neither house or parent being set as primary household which allowed both parents to make legal decisions about the children (Nielsen, 2013). Although custodial arrangements were not one size fits all,

research depicted shared custody was more beneficial for the children involved as opposed to the typical sole custody given to one parent (Melli & Brown, 2008). With single mothers working more frequently, fathers have become more involved in the daily lives and care of children causing shared custody to be more common (Nielsen, 2015). In public surveys completed by the National Parenting Organization (2015), individuals had more positive input on shared parenting than sole custody.

Over a 28-year span, 40 studies were conducted and published in academic journals comparing shared custody to the mother as sole custodian (Nielsen, 2015). The study involved children ages one to 22 (Nielsen, 2015). Out of the 40 studies, 31,483 children were living in shared custody arrangements, while 83,674 were living in mother sole custody households (Nielsen, 2015). For these studies, shared custody was considered living with the father 35%-50% of the time (Nielsen, 2015). Findings from the studies were grouped into five outcomes: a) academics, b) psychological, c) behavioral, d) health, and e) quality of father-child relationships (Nielsen, 2015).

Data collected from the 40 studies showed positive feedback when comparing kids from sole to shared custody situations (Melli & Brown, 2008). Children from shared custody households maintained better grades, held more positive behaviors, had better health, and appeared less depressed than those in sole custody situations (Melli & Brown, 2008). Furthermore, by living in shared custody situations, children were less likely to be put in adult roles, reducing the amount of stress on the children (Melli & Brown, 2008). With both parents available, children were 30% less likely to attend daycares or require a sitter (Nielsen, 2015). Overall, children from shared custody plans were more pleased with their living situations than those from sole custody plans (Melli & Brown, 2008).

Kelly (2012), one of the most respected researchers on children of divorce, explained children from divorced homes reported the most negative aspect of divorce was time lost with their fathers. Shared custody has given children the opportunity to establish a high-quality relationship with both parents (Fabicius, 2003). After being surveyed, mothers from the 40 studies informed researchers fathers from shared custody plans were extremely involved in the children's daily lives (Campana et al., 2008). Some mothers even noted they wished the fathers would be less involved (Campana et al., 2008). Nielsen (2015) backed the research data by writing, "Time distribution arrangements that ensure the involvement of both parents in important aspects of their children's everyday lives and routines--including bedtime and waking rituals, transition to and from school, extracurricular and recreational activities" kept fathers playing a vital and central role (p.129). Research indicated 90% of shared custody fathers attended school events, while 60% of fathers from a mother sole custody situation attended such events (Nielsen, 2015).

Even though in a majority of shared plans the parents were not cooperating or co-parenting, the situation was still more beneficial than sole custody (Nielsen, 2013, 2015; Jones, 2015). One of the most consistent findings in research related to children of divorced families was most children claimed they did not like every other weekend parenting plans (Smith, 2003). From studies conducted, courts began making changes in family law procedures (DiFonzo, 2015). A shift from fathers receiving every other weekend to 35% to 50% custody was put into place (DiFonzo, 2015). In the United States in 2015, 40 states have been in the process of adjusting custody laws towards shared parenting (Jones, 2015). The remaining states already implemented this idea

(Jones, 2015). By adjusting custody plan laws, many children were greatly impacted in a positive manner (Jones, 2015).

Sole custody. When dealing with child custody arrangements, the most sought-after custody plan by parents was sole custody (Wolf, 2017). Sole custody was described as children living with one parent more than 50% of the time (Wolf, 2017; Nielsen, 2015). This plan allowed one parent to spend the majority of the time with the children (Nielsen, 2015). Typically, in sole custody plans, the mother was the residential parent (Nielsen, 2015). The children spent alternate weekends and a few weeks during the summer with the father, the typical non-residential parent (Nielsen, 2015). In these cases, the fathers roughly spent 20% of the time with the children (Nielsen, 2015).

In the United States, one out of every four children under the age of 18 from divorce lived in a sole custody situation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Wolf (2017) indicated one out of six sole custodial parents were fathers. Previous research completed on sole custody plans had very little positive remarks from professionals on children of divorce (Bauserman, 2002). More often than not, the non-custodial parent was viewed as unfit or not a good parent (Wolf, 2017).

Although courts have no longer been favoring sole custody arrangements for children of divorce, there have been some benefits (Wolf, 2017). When children split time more equally with each parent, they were exposed to conflict more frequently between the parents during pick-up and drop-off times (Bauserman, 2002). With sole custody, there was less time spent with both parents together (Bauserman, 2002). Also, shared time disrupted the children's need for stability (Bauserman, 2002). By living in one main home the majority of the time, children were able to establish consistent

routines which they thrived on (Wolf, 2017). Children psychologists suggested children spend very few overnight stays with the non-custodial parent, so attachment issues were not created (Tornello et al., 2013). Fewer overnight stays was highly suggested more so for infants and toddlers (Sroufe & McIntosh, 2011). Children of sole custody arrangements were not switching homes and shuffling personal belongings around which gave them the stability required for developing a self-identity in the household (Wolf, 2017).

Co-parenting. Co-parenting was described as two or more individuals sharing the responsibilities of raising a child (McHale & Lindahl, 2011; Kamp-Dush, Kotila, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). The concept of co-parenting originated in the late 1950s during the Family Therapy Movement (McHale & Kuersten-Hogan, 2004). The movement stemmed from Minuchin's (1974) principles of structural family theory, which stated families had internal structures and children's development thrived on family support. Perkins (2014) declared a great need for research on positive co-parenting due to the high divorce rates. Even though there was a need for research, the importance of co-parenting on a child's development was documented over the past 20 years (Sushchik, 2016). A high-quality of co-parenting resulted in a positive adjustment for the children following the divorce (Sushchik, 2016, Bastaitis & Mortelmans, 2016).

Co-parenting was known to be extremely difficult for parents because of the change in boundaries and roles following a divorce (Pruett & Densky, 2011; Perkins, 2014). In order to have a positive co-parenting relationship, parents had to set aside differences from their previous relationship together (Kamp-Dush, Kotila, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). Generally speaking, when the divorce process was uncompromising and

rough, a conflictual co-parenting relationship was established (Perkins, 2014). Many times, the quality of co-parenting impacted the final court-ordered custodial arrangement (Nielsen, 2017). If parents were unable to co-parent in the best interest of the child, parents were incapable of acquiring shared custody (Nielsen, 2017).

When speaking of a healthy co-parenting relationship, researchers comprised a list of essential components which should be considered during the transition process (Kamp-Dush, Kotila, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011). First, both parents must have been equally invested in the child which included frequent communication regarding the child (Kamp-Dush et al., 2011). Secondly, the parents needed to value the importance of each other to the child; no matter what the child loved both parents (Kamp-Dush et al., 2011). Lastly, both parents respected each other's parenting styles and input regarding to the child's upbringing (Kamp-Dush et al., 2011). Successful co-parenting relationships occurred when the parents supported one another (Kamp-Dush et al., 2011).

Previous literature alluded to three types of post-divorce co-parenting styles: cooperative, parallel, and conflictual (Baum, 2004). The best situation for children was when the parents displayed a cooperative parenting style (McHale et al., 2002). Parents with this style were both actively involved in the child's life and rarely had conflict with one another (Baum, 2004). Getting along with one another was beneficial for the personal development of the child (McHale et al., 2002). These children displayed higher self-esteem than those in parallel or conflictual styles of co-parenting (Sushchuk, 2016). Although not as impactful, some situations displayed parallel parenting styles, where one parent's involvement, typically the father's, depended on the other parent's will to allow it (Baum, 2004). The majority of the time each parent raised the child their way with

little involvement from the other parent (Baum, 2004). In the United States, 75% of divorced parents had a cooperative or parallel co-parenting style with the other parent (Perkins, 2014). Finally, the last co-parenting style was conflictual (Baum, 2004). Parents who displayed this type of relationship had high conflict with one another, resulting in the elimination of one parent in the child's life (Baum, 2004).

Although it seemed negative issues with children occurred due to parental divorce, this was not always the case (Nunes-Costa, Lamela, & Figueiredo, 2009). The issues were displayed due to the impact of co-parenting (Nunes-Costa et al., 2009). The degree of co-parenting was the main predictor of a child's mental health and development (Nunes-Costa et al., 2009; Lamela & Figueiredo, 2016). Lamela and Figueiredo (2016) found the younger the child was, the harder it was for parents to co-parent with one another positively. Another factor harming effective co-parenting was when one parent, especially mothers, entered a new relationship (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). The process of bringing in another individual created a lack of motivation to properly co-parent (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). Often, once a co-parenting relationship became negative, children were placed in the middle, becoming a third party of communication (Kelly & Emery, 2003). By doing this, stress was placed on the child, causing higher levels of depression and anxiety (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Summary

Throughout Chapter Two, the vital concepts of divorce were mentioned, including literature on the theoretical frameworks related to human needs, wants, and motives. The theories of Maslow, Erikson, and Bronfenbrenner built the framework of the literature review, alluding to the importance of the needs and development of children. The

researcher also examined previous literature related to the impacting factors of divorce on children. The impacting factors included characteristics of the child, situational characteristics, and custodial issues. Chapter Three will explain the design and methodology of the study. The researcher will provide information on the participants, type of study, the instrumentation used, and how data were collected.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The conventional family structure in the United States was undergoing rapid alterations (Hetherington, 2014). Divorce has become a frequent event, which will influence more than half of America's children in the next 10 years (Owusu-Bempah, 2007). As divorce rates increased in the United States, it became imperative to understand the risks children from divorce encounter when adjusting to school during the time in and around the divorce (Kelly & Emery, 2003; Banks, 2014). When compared to peers from intact families, children of divorce displayed drastic adjustment issues in various areas of their lives (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Many children have had long-lasting academic and behavioral effects (Foulkes-Jamison, 2013). Foulkes-Jamison (2013) found male students tended to display more negative outbursts than female students during the adjustment period of parental divorce. This pointed to an increasing problem for children of divorced parents, and one to be gender related.

Problem

As the population of students from divorced homes increased, educators noticed academic and behavioral issues and trends with these students in the classroom (Amato, 2001; Frisco, Muller, & Frank, 2007; Sun & Li, 2011). Children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade have been considered to be in a critical period for psychosocial, emotional, and cognitive transformations (Hines, 2007). Previous research indicated children from divorced families have had higher rates of depression and antisocial behaviors (Devor, 2014). According to Sin and Li (2011), parental divorce had a noteworthy negative impact on children's academic achievement as well. However, there was limited current and relevant data on the influence gender plays on these impacts.

With increasing numbers of children coming into the classroom from divorced homes, there was a demonstrated need to have more up-to-date information on the impact of divorce on the education world (Amato, 2001). The study examined kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers' perceptions of children of divorce situations and how this affected the academic and behavioral problems these children faced in school. This design of the study was to help teachers, counselors, and other professionals in the education field to be aware of the impact divorce played on children and the way boys and girls may have reacted differently.

Purpose

Throughout this study, the researcher gathered evidence to analyze the impact parental divorce had on a children's behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth. More specifically the purpose of this study was to find if and how parental divorce influenced each gender. The research conducted throughout this study would be vital to the education world. This study would help teachers in the future be aware of the impact divorce had on behaviors and academic performance in children from divorce. Thus, this would allow teachers to be a support system for these students.

Research Bias

Bias was inherent to the research study and was addressed. The biggest concern for research bias in this study was the interpretation of data (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data. Creswell (2015) warned researchers to be careful when analyzing quantitative data due to the outliers. The outliers made data interpretation difficult (Creswell, 2015).

Since divorce was a topic of broad and current interest in today's society, this study possessed the possibility of having a bias. Due to the researcher's background, it was imperative to analyze both, quantitative and qualitative, data forms precisely as received. To do so, the researcher created open-ended questions to collect data on the teachers' experiences. The researcher made sure to display the data from the open-ended questions without adding a personal twist.

Research Questions

Based on the evidence pointing to a lack of literature on this topic, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Do teachers perceive there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth grade from a divorced situation based on the student's gender?

2. How does the gender of a child from a divorce situation affect his/her behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting?

Hypothesis

Question 1.

H₁- The gender of a child does affect the teacher's perception of behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting.

H₀- The gender of a child does not affect the teacher's perception of behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting.

Question 2.

H₁- Boys will demonstrate more negative behavioral and academic struggles in grades kindergarten through eighth than girls will.

H₀- Girls will demonstrate more negative behavioral and academic struggles in grades kindergarten through eighth than boys will.

Research Design

The researcher developed this study to examine the perceptions of Mid-Missouri kindergarten through eighth-grade educators regarding the impact parental divorces had on students' academic and behavioral performance. The design for this study was a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods research approach provided quantitative and qualitative data, based on kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers perceptions on the various negative impacts parental divorces may have had on students, in order to answer the research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2013; Bluman, 2015; Morse, 2016). The researcher utilized a mixed-methods approach for the study, because it provided a better understanding of the research problem and questions, rather than only using one approach (Creswell, 2015; Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Maxwell (2013) and Creswell (2015) mentioned by mixing quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher would obtain a powerful mix of information, making the data more in-depth for the study. If conducted properly, a mixed-method design strongly enhanced the validity of the research (Morse, 2016). A mixed-methods approach was best for this study, by providing statistical (quantitative) data about teachers' perceptions from a Likert scale and teachers input of their experiences with children of divorce from four short answer questions (qualitative). Teachers provided feedback from the last five

years on what they witnessed in the classroom related to behavior and academics from children who have experienced parental divorce situations. The teachers identified the students from divorced homes based on the schools' databases or parental input from the beginning of the school year. This mixed-methods design provided the researcher with quantified data supported by the qualitative data, which made the study more reliable.

Quantitative data. When completing quantitative research, the researcher used an instrument to measure the variables in a study (Creswell, 2015). Research instruments have included surveys or checklists (Creswell, 2015). Bluman (2013) simplified this by stating quantitative data were numerical data. To analyze the data, the researcher used statistics and mathematical procedures to help answer the research questions (Creswell, 2015). The researcher modified a six-point Likert scale created by Atilas, Oliver, and Brosi (2017) (see Appendix A) to collect quantitative data. The answer options were: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Somewhat Agree, (5) Agree, and (6) Strongly Agree. The researcher divided the survey by gender. Likert Items one through 12, 25, 29, 30, and 33 related to male students, while Likert Items 13 through 24, 26, 32, and 34 related to female students. The division provided a more efficient way to analyze and determine if teachers perceived a difference in academics and behaviors based on the children's gender. The researcher used this form of numerical data to answer research question one with a specific percentage which left no room for bias to interfere with the analyzation of data.

Qualitative data. According to Creswell (2015), qualitative data depended on the opinions of the research participants. The researcher placed data, narrative or descriptive, in groups or themes (Bluman, 2013). The researcher collected data through

open-ended questions or surveys (Maxwell, 2013). Questions were broad in order to leave room for the participants to answer how they see fit (Creswell, 2015). The researcher asked open-ended questions on teachers' experiences of working with children of divorce. This allowed the participants to expand on the topic with expertise for teaching children from a divorced situation which helped answer research question two (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Sample

Approximately, 332 kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers were invited to participate in the study. This study required a minimum of 25% ($n=83$) of the population in order for the data to be valid. From the population of 332 educators, 25.30% ($n=84$) of the kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers agreed to participate by completing the on-line survey. The researcher used all data received by the sample. The sample of educators represented seven Central Missouri school districts. The four counties represented in this study were Phelps, Pulaski, Crawford, and Miller County. Three of the districts were located in Phelps County. Two school districts were in Pulaski County. Crawford and Miller County each had one participating school district (see Table 2). Permission to conduct research in the participating school districts was received via e-mail by the superintendents (see Appendix D). The school districts were coded (a) School District A, (b) School District B, (c) School District C, (d) School District D, (e) School District E, (f) School District F, and (g) School District G. The researcher invited approximately 332 kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers to participate in the study.

Table 2

Distribution of Schools from Participating Counties

County	Elementary School	Middle School	Junior High School	High School
Phelps	5	3	1	3
Pulaski	2	1	0	2
Crawford	1	1	0	1
Miller	1	0	0	1

Note. Data provided by participating school districts.

Phelps County. Phelps County was located in Central Missouri. As of July 1, 2016, Phelps County's population was 44,608, making it the 23rd largest county in Missouri (United States Census Bureau, 2016). According to a census report, roughly 80% of Phelps County was employed (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Approximately 18.2% of the working population was involved in educational services, which was the largest working group in Phelps County (Data USA, 2017). More than 11% of the families in Phelps County were shown to be divorced households (Town Charts, 2017).

Pulaski County. Pulaski County, part of Central Missouri, had a population of 52,274 people (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). As of a 2010 Census Report, approximately 79.8% of the population were employed (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Out of this percentage, about 5.4% of the working population have been employed in the educational field (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Roughly 10.5% of the population was divorced (MO Census, 2010).

Crawford County. According to Missouri Data Center (2018), Crawford County had a population of 24,696 people. Approximately 78% of the population were

employed (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). From this percentage, roughly 6.1% of the individuals worked in the educational field (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018).

The county had a 9% divorce rate (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018).

Miller County. Miller County, part of Central Missouri, had a population of 24,748 people (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). As of a 2010 Census Report, approximately 76.3% of the population were employed (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Out of this percentage, 8.3% of the working population were employed in the educational field (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Nearly 8.8% of the population were divorced Missouri Census Data Center, 2018).

Sampling procedure. As a convenience sampling, the researcher chose the participating districts since each of the schools were in close proximity to the research site. Bluman (2013) defined convenience sampling as a sample of participants used due to convenience and availability. Creswell (2015) claimed the convenience sample could offer useful data in order to answer the researcher's questions based on the participants' answers. Since the school districts asked to participate came from counties, which had a verified percentage of divorced individuals, it ensured the researcher many of the participants were teaching or taught a student from a divorced situation (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). According to each county's demographics, at least 8% or more of the population experienced a divorce (Missouri Census Data Center, 2018). Some of the districts' demographic data were comparable to the average of the state Missouri (see Table 3) (DESE, 2017). The population, group of individuals who contained a similar characteristic, were the schoolteachers in grades kindergarten through eighth-grade who had students from divorced families (Creswell, 2015). The sample was a represented

group from this population. From the 332 invited participants, a minimum of 25% was included in the sample. This created a sample size of 83 teachers. The researcher used all data received by the sample.

Identifying the students who came from divorced homes was one of the challenges within this study. Teachers had to identify the students within their classrooms who experienced parental divorce. In many cases, the educators had some form of a database with personal information on each student, which included custody and household information. For those teachers without this system provided by the district, they determined the students from a divorced household through information provided by the parents. Teachers filled out the rating scale based on their experiences with children from a divorced home.

School District A. The community School District A was located in included a university, which attracted many people each year for the educational and job opportunities it provides. For the year of 2017, the district enrolled 4,068 students in kindergarten through 12th grade (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). Typically, there have been 21 students to every classroom teacher (Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, 2016). Attendance rates in School District A were approximately 95% in 2017 (MO DESE, 2017) (see Table 3). According to MO DESE (2017), the School District A had 49.2% of the student population on a free and reduced lunch plan. School District A contained three elementary schools, a middle school, and both a junior and high school, as well as a technical center. The elementary schools included grades pre-kindergarten through third grade. The middle school was comprised of students in grades fourth through sixth. The junior high school housed

students in seventh and eighth grades. Students in grades ninth through 12th were at the high school.

School District B. For the year of 2017, the district enrolled 1,763 students in kindergarten through 12th grade (MO DESE, 2017) (see Table 3). On average, there have been 19 students to every classroom teacher (OSED, 2016). In 2017, School District B had approximately a 94% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017). On the District's Annual Report Card on DESE (2017), School District B had 59.4% of the student population on free and reduced lunches. The district was home to four buildings, an elementary, middle, high, and alternative school. The elementary school included pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The middle school was comprised of students in sixth through eighth grades. Students in ninth through 12th were located at the high school.

School District C. School District C has drawn students from a few smaller surrounding towns. In 2017, School District C enrolled 400 students (MO DESE, 2017). The district encompassed kindergarten through 12th grade (MO DESE, 2017) (see Table 3). In the district, there was a 15:1 ratio of student to teachers (OSED, 2016). School District C approximately had a 94% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017). According to MO DESE's (2017) District Annual Report Card, School District C had 67.1% of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch services. There were three buildings in the district. The elementary school contained grades pre-kindergarten through fourth. The middle school was comprised of students in grades fifth through eighth. Students in ninth through 12th grade were located at the high school.

School District D. During the year of 2017, School District D enrolled 637 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade (DESE, 2017). The district had 13

students to every classroom teacher (OSED, 2016) (see Table 3). In 2017, School District D had a 94% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017). According to MO DESE (2017), this district had 64.7% of the student population on a free and reduced lunch plan. School District D was home to three buildings, an elementary, middle, and high school. The elementary included pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The middle school was comprised of students in sixth through eighth grades. Students in ninth through 12th grade were located in the high school.

School District E. According to MO DESE (2017), School District E enrolled 510 students in grades kindergarten through 12th. On average, there have been 15 students to every classroom teacher (OSED, 2016). In 2017, the district had approximately a 95% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017) (see Table 3). On the District's Annual Report Card on MO DESE (2017), School District E had 76.7% of the student population on free and reduced lunches. The district was home to two buildings, an elementary and high school. The building breakdown was unavailable.

School District F. In 2017, School District F enrolled 1,425 students with a 95% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017). According to OSED (2016), there was a 17:1 student to teacher ratio (see Table 3). The district has had 55% of the student population on a free and reduced meal plan (MO DESE, 2017). School District F was home to three buildings. The elementary school was comprised of students in grades kindergarten through fourth. Students in grades fifth through eighth were located in the middle school, while the high school contained ninth through 12th grade.

School District G. In 2017, School District C enrolled 708 students (MO DESE, 2017). The district encompassed kindergarten through 12th grade (MO DESE, 2017). In

the district, there was a 16:1 ratio of student to teachers (OSEDA, 2016). School District G approximately had a 94% attendance rate (MO DESE, 2017) (see Table 3). According to MO DESE's (2017) district annual report card, School District G had 50.9% of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch services. There were two buildings in the district, an elementary and high school. The building breakdowns were not available.

Table 3

School District Demographics

District	Enrollment	Attendance	Staffing Ratio	Free & Reduced Lunch
Missouri Average	883,915	94%	17:1	51.2%
District A	4,068	95%	21:1	49.2%
District B	1,763	94%	19:1	59.4%
District C	400	94%	15:1	67.1%
District D	637	94%	13:1	64.7%
District E	510	95%	15:1	76.7%
District F	1,425	95%	17:1	55%
District G	708	94%	16:1	50.9%

Note. Information provided by DESE (2017) and OSEDA (2016).

Instrumentation

The tool used in the study was comprised of a survey, which collected both quantitative and qualitative data for this mixed-methods design. The tool was available to kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers (see Appendix A) in seven school districts in Missouri. The researcher requested permission to contact the buildings' principals through an e-mail correspondence to the superintendents (see Appendix D). After

granted approval, the researcher electronically contacted the building principals (see Appendix E) to either send out a school wide e-mail with the survey link or respond to the researcher with e-mail contact information for the teacher participants. The researcher invited kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers in each district to participate in an on-line Google Forms (2017). The survey included 34 Likert scale statements and four open-ended questions.

The researcher acquired data through the administration of a survey instrument modified from The Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale (PCDS) (see Appendix A) designed by Atilas, Oliver, and Brosi (2017). Atilas, Oliver, and Brosi (2017) developed the scale together based on the research from Foulkes-Jamison (2009) and Pickar (2003). The survey was adapted from The Effects of Divorce on Children (Foulkes-Jamison, 2009), which explained the effects of parental divorce on children. Also, *Identifying Children's Stress-Response to Divorce* (Pickar, 2003) identified various effects children experienced which was attributed from divorce. The researcher received permission to modify the survey to better fit the current study. Some questions were changed to be more focused on the students' academics and behaviors, and whether they were gender specific. To address Research Question One, the researcher collected quantitative data through the Likert-scale items. The four open-ended questions provided qualitative data on how teachers viewed the effects of divorce on students in their classroom. Ultimately, the researcher sought to determine whether the gender of the child influenced the results.

The Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale. The original PCDS contained two sub-scales with 23 questions. When developing this instrument, Atilas et al. (2017) used previous research to verify the various effects children may experience from a

divorce when developing this instrument. The first 12-question sub-scale measured the participants' awareness of the various reactions children may potentially display after experiencing a parental divorce (Oliver, 2012). Research from Foulkes-Jamison (2009) guided the questions with information on the effects divorce had on children. The second subscale contained 11 questions. Research from Pickar (2003) aided in the creation of these questions (Oliver, 2012). This portion of the scale addressed the effects of children in a post-divorce home (Oliver, 2012).

The teachers' answers on the PCDS provided the researcher with quantitative data on the teachers' perceptions of the impact divorce played on academics and behaviors from children in kindergarten through eighth-grade. Along with the scale, participants included demographic information and answered four open-ended questions. The open-ended question allowed the participants to offer further specific information based on previous experiences with children from a divorced situation. Open-ended questions allowed for qualitative data collection in order for the researcher to provide descriptive data to address the research questions (Mertens, 2005). The open-ended questions asked were:

1. Can you share an experience(s) where you personally dealt with a child from a divorced situation in the classroom? How did this impact the classroom setting? Please note the child's gender in the situation.
2. How have the number of children in your classroom from a divorced setting changed within the past five years?
3. Do you notice more academic or behavioral issues from students of a divorced situation and is it effected by the gender of the child?

4. Describe whether more boys or girls openly discuss a parental divorce.

Reliability. Atilas et al. (2017) claimed the PCDS to be a reliable and valid source to use. Zohrabi (2013) specified researchers must consider the reliability of instrumentations to be used in order to obtain valid data. Maxwell (2013) stated, “Validity is also relative: It has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions.” The creators of the PCDS stated subscale one yielded a Cronbach’s alpha .98, while the subscale two yielded a Cronbach’s alpha .94. Since the Cronbach’s alpha rated over .6, the researcher considered the PCDS reliable and valid to use for this study (Taber, 2018). Scores over .9 revealed an excellent internal consistency for reliability (Taber, 2018). The researcher received permission through e-mail to use and modify the PCDS (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

Mertens (2005) suggested researchers should send a request for approval before administering a survey. Initially, 15 school districts in Mid Missouri were contacted to participate in the research study. Out of the 15 school districts selected to participate, seven superintendents responded affirmatively to create the sample size. The researcher began the data collection process by contacting the seven representing superintendents through a recruitment letter (see Appendix D). The recruitment letter explained the research project and requested permission to conduct the study within the district. The use of an e-mail correspondence was efficient and effective for the researcher and superintendents since it was electronic. After IRB approval, the researcher sent a recruitment letter to each building principal in the participating district (see Appendix E).

The researcher created seven folders, one for each district school, in order to keep participating schools' information grouped by district. After the building principal agreed to allow teacher participation to occur in the school, kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers received an e-mail including a recruitment letter and link to the Google Survey (see Appendix C). Along with the survey link was an explanation of the researcher's purpose of the study and an Informed Consent Form of Participation. The letter indicated the period the survey was available through Google Forms (Google Forms, 2017). The completion of the survey implied informed consent. The survey window was open for three weeks to all participants. After a week and a half into the survey completion window, the researcher sent an e-mail to the teachers served as a reminder (see Appendix F). At the end of the three weeks, the researcher still needed more participation. The researcher extended the survey window an extra week by sending out another electronic notification asking for more participation (see Appendix G). Once the survey completion window ended, the survey link was no longer available to access.

Procedures. To administer the survey, the researcher used the Google Forms (Google Forms, 2017), an on-line tool. Due to the advancements in technology, electronic data collection has become extremely popular (Creswell, 2015). Collecting data electronically was efficient and effective means for the researcher. The researcher constructed a Google survey modified from the PCDS (Atilas et al., 2017). The original survey was modified to better address the research questions. The Google survey included demographic data to create a better understanding of the participants' backgrounds and experiences, 34 Likert statements to address the various ways divorce

affected children's academic and behaviors, and four open-ended questions to determine whether the gender of the children made an impact on the academic and behavioral performance.

After IRB approval, the researcher distributed the survey to teacher participants in the seven school districts selected from the sample through an e-mail invitation (see Appendix C). The survey window was open for three weeks. At the half way point, the researcher sent a reminder e-mail to the participating teachers reminding them of the closing date of the survey (see Appendix F). After the three weeks from the initial start date, the researcher had not met the required sample size. The researcher extended the survey window another week. Kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers were notified, in order to receive more participation (see Appendix G). After the additional week, the window closed and the researcher printed the results from Google survey sheets. The researcher sorted, analyzed to look for trends in the data to address the research questions, and stored the results in a locked filing cabinet. No signed agreements needed to be shred due to a volunteer process of completing the survey. Once the survey results were compiled and analyzed, the researcher sent the district's data to the individuals who requested the research results during the research approval process.

Ethical Considerations. Through the research process, the researcher followed the Lindenwood University's IRB guidelines, due to the involvement of human subjects. Before conducting any research, permission to contact the building principals was requested through the school districts' superintendents. After permission was granted from the superintendents, the researcher made contact with each districts' building principal through e-mail. Once permission was granted from the respective principals,

the researcher sent out an e-mail to the kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers of the various buildings (see Appendix C). The e-mail contained the link to the Google survey, as well as the purpose of the study, the length of time the survey was open, and a consent letter explaining the completion of the survey will result in implied consent to participate in the research.

Data collected from teacher participants was coded using a letter, number, letter (A1a) combination to help protect the identity of the participant. This also kept the results organized. In the assigned code, the first digit in the code identified the school district, the second digit in the combination identified the grade kindergarten through eighth, and the last digit represented the teacher. The participants had the option to stop and exit the survey at any time if they chose to do so. All information provided by the participants was voluntary. Data was password protected through the researcher's Google Drive. The researcher stored the collected data securely through password protected and locked for three years according to Lindenwood University's IRB guidelines.

Data Analysis

Through the mixed-methods research design, the quantitative data was collected through the modified PCDS instrument. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher utilized Google Forms to collect and configure the data. Google forms displayed the participants' answers in a spreadsheet and pie chart. Atilas et al. (2017) designed the PCDS to reflect teacher awareness on the effects of divorce on children, thus dividing the scale into two sub-scales. The researcher combined the answers from the two sub-scales to analyze if the gender of the child from a divorced family impacted the behaviors and

academics of kindergarten through eighth-grade students. Google forms provided the researcher with percentages of agreement of the impacts of divorce for the participants' responses. According to Atilas et al. (2017), specific gender scale ratings noting a negative impact or characteristic over 50% on the Likert scale indicated to the researcher the gender of the child impacted behaviors and academics. While the responses under 50% suggested, gender did not play a part in the impact of divorce. Qualitative data was obtained through open-ended questions. The researcher reviewed each of the participants' answers to the open-ended questions and sifted through to identify possible themes or trends in the data.

Trends. The researcher looked for trends in the answers provided by the participating teachers. The researcher examined to see whether one gender displayed more behavioral issues in the classroom setting. Through the collection process, the researcher analyzed the data to see whether one gender demonstrated academic struggles in the classroom. The researcher also investigated the demographic data and responses to determine if there were any trends in the responses related to years of experience or gender of the participant. The data collected from the participants would be beneficial to educators in the future. Educators could use this research to become more aware of the potential behavioral and academic struggles children from divorce could face.

Limitations. Several limitations had the potential to occur during the research study. Teachers had the opportunity to portray a bias on the topic of divorce. When providing an answer about children of divorce many teachers may have had only prior experiences with one specific gender and not both genders inside the classroom, which left room for one-sided data. Teachers needed a way to provide information on children

who previously experienced a parental divorce. Schools without a database to identify children from divorced households became a limitation for this study. The limitations in the study posed threats to the validity of the collected data.

Summary

This research aimed to provide insight into the impact the gender of children had on the academics and behavior of kindergarten through eighth-grade students from divorced families. In order to complete the research, the researcher utilized a mixed-methods study, which collected qualitative and quantitative data. The data was collected through demographic information, 34 Likert scale statements, and four open-ended questions to address the research questions. Individuals who volunteered to participate in the study were kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers from seven Mid-Missouri school districts. Chapter Four will include an analysis of the data to be collected from the research process.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to explore kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers' perceptions of the impact parental divorce may have had on children's' academic and behavioral performance in school. More explicitly, the purpose of the study was to determine if, how, and to what degree parental divorce influenced each gender.

According to Arkes (2015), divorce negatively affected children's academic and social performances, especially within the first four years preceding the divorce. Upon IRB approval, an electronic survey consisting of 34 Likert scale items and four open-ended questions was distributed to kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers from the seven participating school districts in Mid-Missouri. The survey was designed to address the two research questions:

1. Do teachers perceive there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth grade from a divorced situation based on the student's gender?

2. How does the gender of a child from a divorce situation affect his/her behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting?

Demographic Data

For this study, a recruitment letter (see Appendix C) and survey link were electronically distributed to 332 kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers in the seven participating school districts. The survey window was three weeks, allowing participants to access the survey link; midway through the survey window, a reminder e-mail was sent to the participating schools. At the close of the survey window, the researcher had

not obtained enough responses to maintain the validity of the study. In order to assure the validity of the data, the researcher extended the survey window for one week and contacted the building administrators and teacher participants to notify them of the extension (see Appendix G) and to make kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers aware more participation would be required to fulfill the researcher's needs.

Out of 332 teacher invitations for voluntary participation, 25% ($n=84$) educators completed the survey. The largest percentage of surveys, 51.20% ($n=43$) were returned by School District A. From the 84 completed surveys, 10.71% ($n=9$) were returned by School District B, and 5.95% ($n=5$) were returned by School District C. A total of 7.14% ($n=6$) of teachers participated from School District D. School District E did not have any participants. Of the 84 responses, 20.24% ($n=17$) were returned by School District F, and 4.76% ($n=4$) were returned by School District G (see Table 4).

Table 4

Distribution of Participating Schools

School District	<i>n</i>	Percentages
School District A	43	51.20
School District B	9	10.71
School District C	5	5.95
School District D	6	7.14
School District E	0	0
School District F	17	20.24
School District G	4	4.76
Total	84	100.00

Note. Data collected from survey results.

The following demographic data was collected from the seven participating school districts pertaining to the teachers' educational background. Out of the 84 participants, 34.5% ($n=29$) held a Bachelor's Degree only. A substantial portion of the participating kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers held a degree above a Bachelor's Degree. A little over half of the sample, 52.4% ($n=44$), obtained a Master's Degree, as well as 11.9% ($n=10$) held a specialist degree, and 1.2% ($n=1$) had acquired a Doctorate Degree.

The demographic portion of the survey accounting for teachers' experiences was divided into four sections: (a) zero to five years, (b) six to 10 years, (c) 11 to 15 years, and (d) more than 15 years. The years of teaching experience was fairly evenly distributed among the participants (see Table 5). Out of the 84 respondents, 27.4% ($n=23$) of the educators had less than five years of experience, 22.6% ($n=19$) had six to 10 years, 11.9% ($n=10$) had been teaching 11 to 15 years. The largest group, 38.1% ($n=32$), had more than 15 years of teaching experience. Teacher participants were asked whether their respective school districts had a means for tracking children of divorced households. Of the 84 participants, 48.2% ($n=40$) of the kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers selected "no" their buildings did not have a way to identify children from a divorced household. However, the remaining 51.8% ($n=43$) claimed their buildings did have specific ways to identify children from divorced settings.

Table 5

Participants' Years of Experience

Years of Experience	<i>n</i>	Percentages
0-5	23	27.40
6-10	19	22.60
11-15	10	11.90
More than 15	32	38.10
Total	84	100.00

Note. Data collected from survey results.

Participants' Professional Development. In School District A, 86.04% ($n=37$) of the 43 participants stated their building did not provide any professional development on working with children from a divorced background, while 6.98% ($n=3$) of teachers from the same school district claimed their building has provided training. The remaining 6.98% ($n=3$) did not answer the question. Those who received professional development all stated the training was on the legal ramifications when communicating with parents of children from a divorced setting. Out of the 43 participants who claimed to have not received professional development, 95.35% ($n=41$) stated training in this area would be beneficial, while 4.65% ($n=2$) felt training was not necessary.

In School District B, 88.89% ($n=8$) of the nine participants stated their building did not provide professional development opportunities for working with children of divorce. The remaining 1.11% ($n=1$) did not respond to the question. The majority of the participants, 55.56% ($n=5$), felt training on dealing with children from divorced situations would have been beneficial. However, 22.22% ($n=2$) doubted training was beneficial and another 22.22% ($n=2$) did not answer the question.

From the five participants in School District C, 100% ($n=5$) claimed their building had not provided professional development opportunities on working with children living in a divorced setting. The 40% ($n=2$) who answered the second part of the statement believed training was necessary, and 60% ($n=3$) did not provide an answer. Out of the six participants in School District D, 66.66% ($n=4$) stated there was not professional development provided regarding children from divorced homes, while 16.67% ($n=1$) noted their building had provided a previous training and 16.67% ($n=1$) did not answer the question. From these responses 66.66% ($n=4$) believed training related to children of divorce was beneficial. The remaining 33.34% ($n=2$) did not provide an answer. There was not any data provided by School District E to analyze.

In School District F, 58.82% ($n=10$) of participants disclosed their building did not provide any professional development which addressed working with children from a divorced background, while 5.88% ($n=1$) revealed his/her building had provided training. The remaining 35.30% ($n=6$) did not provide any information. Those who claimed their building provided a training stated the professional development covered working with children from a poverty household which was not specific to children from divorced households. From the 17 participants, 58.82% ($n=10$) believed training in this area would be beneficial, while 5.88% ($n=1$) did not feel training would benefit them. The remaining 35.30% ($n=6$) did not provide additional comments. Out of the four respondents from School District G, 25% ($n=1$) provided information on professional development. This respondent said the building did not provide any training on working with children from a divorced background. Although the remaining 75% ($n=3$) did not state whether their building held professional developments trainings related to children

of divorced homes; they noted training was beneficial and extremely necessary for educators.

Analysis of Survey Data

The researcher inspected data provided by all of the kindergarten through eighth-grade teacher participants by viewing the total number of responses. A total of 84 out of 332 (25.30%) kindergarten through eighth-grade educators completed the survey from the seven participating school districts. All the items on the survey were directed at the teachers' perceptions of the impact parental divorce had on kindergarten through eighth-grade students' academics and behaviors. More specifically, questions referred to if and how the gender of children affected their academics and behaviors. The first 34 survey items were Likert scale statements based on teacher perceptions over the past five years of children from divorced backgrounds. Items one through 12, 25, 29, 30, and 33 focused specifically on male students. Items 13 through 24, 26, 32, and 34 addressed female students. Items 27, 28, and 31 were general statements on the teachers' perceptions of divorce. The remaining four survey items were open-ended questions to allow the educators to provide additional insight to their personal experiences within the past five years with children from divorced situations.

The Likert scale items were based on a six-point scale. The six-point scale response options were: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Somewhat Agree, (5) Agree, and (6) Strongly Agree. Having a six-point scale provided the researcher with standard deviations. Corresponding with Atilas et al. (2017), specific gender scale ratings noting a negative impact or characteristic over 50% designated to the researcher the gender of the child influenced behaviors and academics. While the

responses below 50% proposed gender did not play a part in the impact of divorce at school. In order to easily compare the genders, the Likert items were grouped below by similar negative impacts or characteristics.

Likert Item 1. *After divorce, male students would experience heightened irritability.* The teacher perception of heightened irritability preceding a parental divorce was the subject of Likert Item 1. Out of the 84 responses returned, over half agreed male students experienced heightened irritability. A total of 14.3% ($n=12$) Strongly Agreed (see Figure 1). Out of the responses, 29.8% ($n=25$) Agreed, and 32.1% ($n=27$) Somewhat Agreed. The remaining responses portrayed a disagreement with the statement. A small number of the respondents, 1.2% ($n=1$), Strongly Disagreed, 2.4% ($n=2$) Somewhat Disagreed, and 20.2% ($n=17$) Disagreed with the statement of male students experiencing heightened irritability post parental divorce.

Likert Item 13. *After divorce, female students would experience heightened irritability.* When surveyed whether female students experience heightened irritability post parental divorce, the teachers' responses were comparable to the responses to Likert Item 1 (see Figure 1). Identical to Likert item 1, 14.3% ($n=12$) Strongly Agreed and 32.1% ($n=27$) Agreed with the statement. Fifteen, or 17.86%, of the educators Somewhat Agreed female students had heightened irritability after a parental divorce. The option Somewhat Disagree was selected by 28.6% ($n=24$) of the survey population. Out of the 84 responses, 4.8% ($n=4$) Disagreed. A small 2.4% ($n=2$) of respondents Strongly Disagreed female students displayed heightened irritability following a parental divorce.

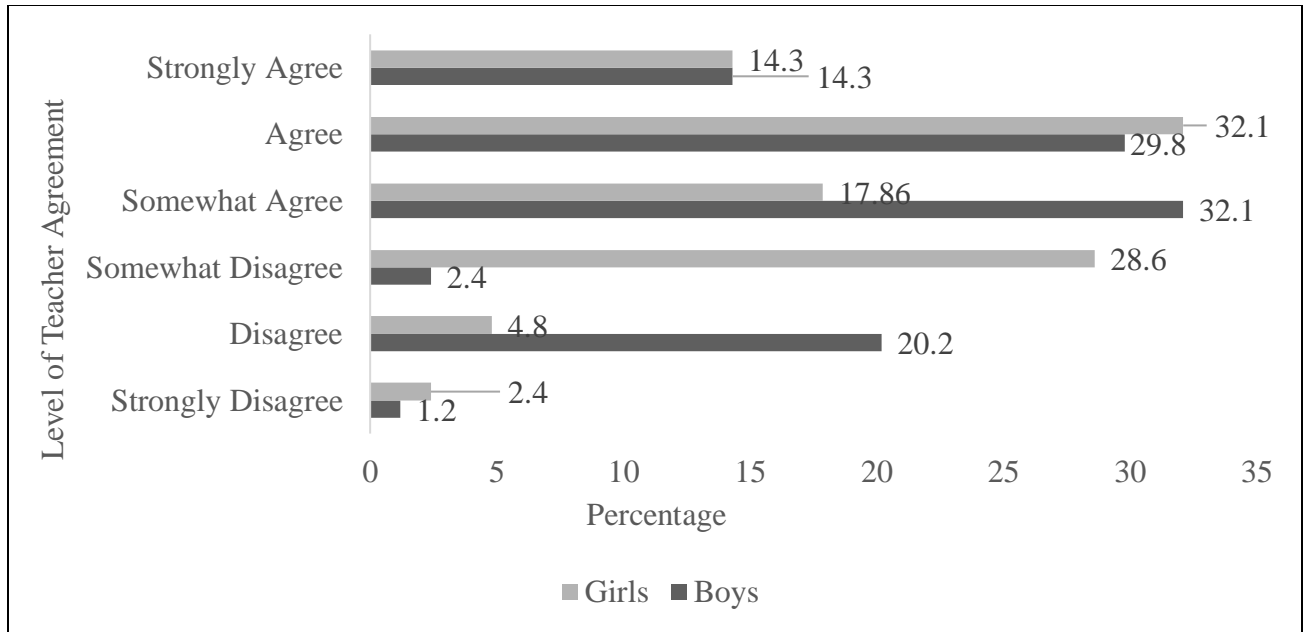


Figure 1. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ heightened irritability after parental divorce.

Data collected from Likert Items 1 and 13.

Likert Item 2. After divorce, male students would experience physical aggression towards self or others. Likert Item 2 asked teacher participants to respond to their perceptions of male student exhibiting physical aggression toward self or others after a parental divorce. More than half, 65.48% ($n=55$), Agreed male students experienced physical aggression towards self or others preceding a parental divorce. The larger majority of the population, 39.3% ($n=33$) Somewhat Agreed with the statement, while 20.2% ($n=17$) Agreed, and 6% ($n=5$) Strongly Agreed (see Figure 2). A small 2.4% ($n=2$) of the population Strongly Disagreed male students experienced physical aggression. Out of the 84 participants 21.4% ($n=18$) Somewhat Disagreed and 10.7% ($n=9$) Disagreed with the statement.

Likert Item 14. After divorce, female students would experience physical aggression towards self or others. When compared to Likert Item 2 (see Figure 2) the

results were opposite. The majority of the participants Disagreed in some way female students experienced physical aggression toward self or others following a parental divorce. The largest percentage of the population, 36.9% ($n=31$) Somewhat Disagreed with the statement, 23.8% ($n=20$) Disagreed, and 6% ($n=5$) Strongly Disagreed. A small portion, 3.6% ($n=3$) Strongly Agreed girls would experience physical aggression after a parental divorce. A total of 10.7% ($n=9$) Agreed and 19% ($n=16$) Somewhat Agreed with the statement.

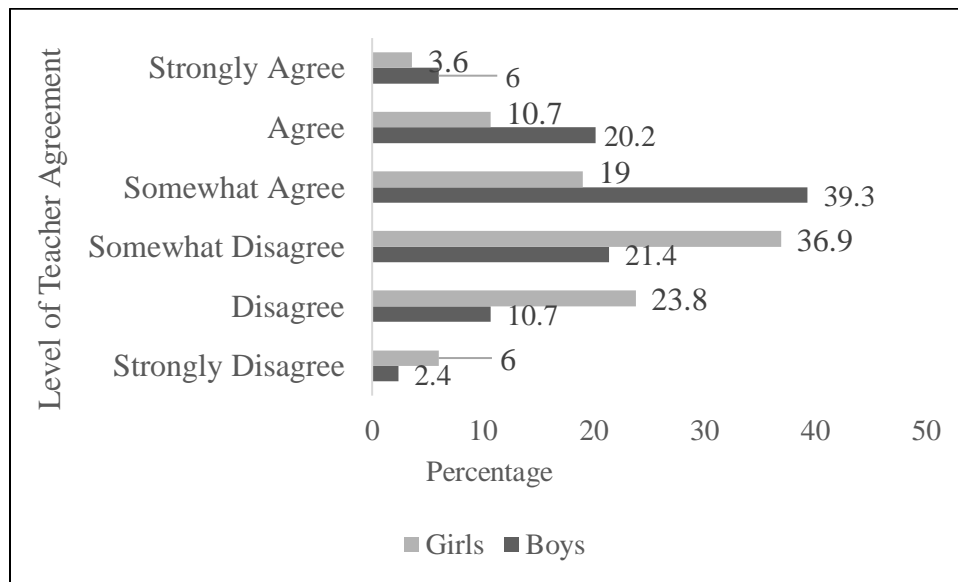


Figure 2. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ physical aggression toward self or others after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 2 and 14.

Likert Item 3. *After divorce, male students would experience increased temper tantrums.* Teacher respondents were questioned on their perceptions of male students exhibiting increased temper tantrums after a parental divorce. All survey participants chose to answer this question. Of the 84 survey respondents, 8.3% ($n=7$) Strongly Agreed (see Figure 3). When answering, 23.8% ($n=20$) of the participants selected Agree

as their answer, while 37, or 13.1%, of the educators Somewhat Agreed with the statement. Very few respondents Disagreed with the Likert Item 3. The option Somewhat Disagree was chosen by 13.1% ($n=11$), and 8.3% ($n=7$) of participants chose Disagree. A low amount, 2.4% ($n=2$), Strongly Disagreed male students experienced increased temper following parental divorces.

Likert Item 15. After divorce, female students would experience increased temper tantrums. The results to this item specifically related to females were similar to Likert Item 3. From the 84 teacher respondents, 10.7% ($n=9$) Strongly Agreed female students experienced increased temper tantrums (see Figure 3). Identical to the responses to Likert Item 3, 23.8% ($n=20$) of the respondents Agreed with the statement. The option Somewhat Agree was selected by 27.4% ($n=23$) of the survey population. Nineteen educators, or 22.6%, Somewhat Disagreed with the statement. A few more individuals, 11.9% ($n=10$), Disagreed with this statement compared to Likert Item 3. Only 3.6% ($n=3$) of the respondents indicated an answer of Strongly Disagree.

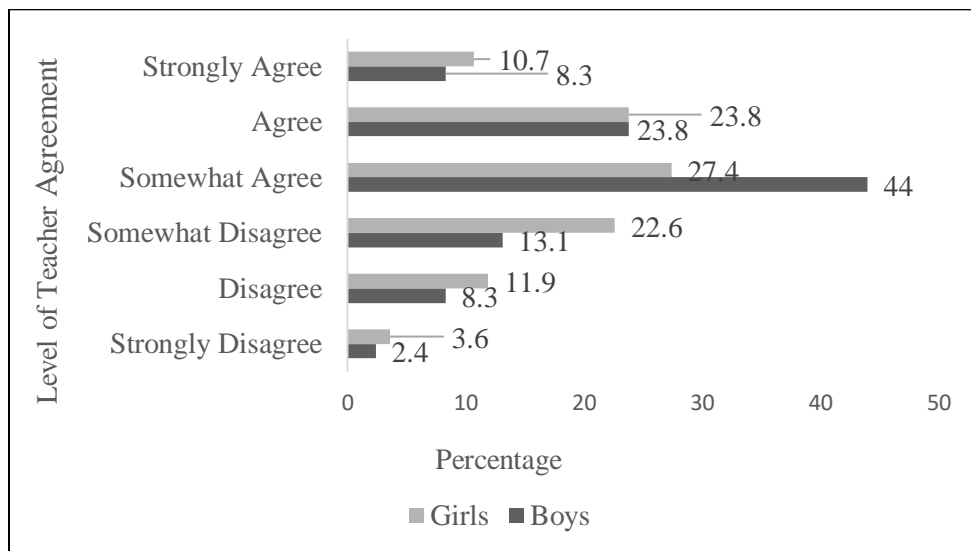


Figure 3. Teachers’ perceptions of an increase in students’ temper tantrums after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 3 and 15.

Likert Item 4. *After divorce, male students would experience excessive clinginess.* The majority of the survey population agreed to some degree after a parental divorce, male students would experience excessive clinginess. A total of 38.1% ($n=32$) Somewhat Agreed and 11.9% ($n=10$) Agreed with the statement (see Figure 4). Only 6% ($n=5$) of the population Strongly Agreed male students would experience excessive clinginess preceding a parental divorce. A small portion of 2.4% ($n=2$) Strongly Disagreed male students experienced excessive clinginess following a parental divorce. Out of the 84 participants, 16.7% ($n=14$) Disagree and 25% ($n=21$) Somewhat Disagree male students would experience excessive clinginess following a parental divorce.

Likert Item 16. *After divorce, female students would experience excessive clinginess.* Similarly, to Likert Item 4, the majority of the teachers felt female students would experience excessive clinginess after a parental divorce. However, the percentages were higher (see Figure 4). The majority of the population, 41.7% ($n=35$), Agreed with the statement. The next highest percentage, 23.8% ($n=20$), Strongly Agreed female students became clingy post parental divorce, while 20.2% ($n=17$) Somewhat Agreed. A lesser ratio of teachers was divided between the remaining responses of 2.4% ($n=2$) Strongly Disagreed, 4.8% ($n=4$) Disagreed, 7.1% ($n=6$) and Somewhat Disagreed in response to female students experienced excessive clinginess when parents divorced.

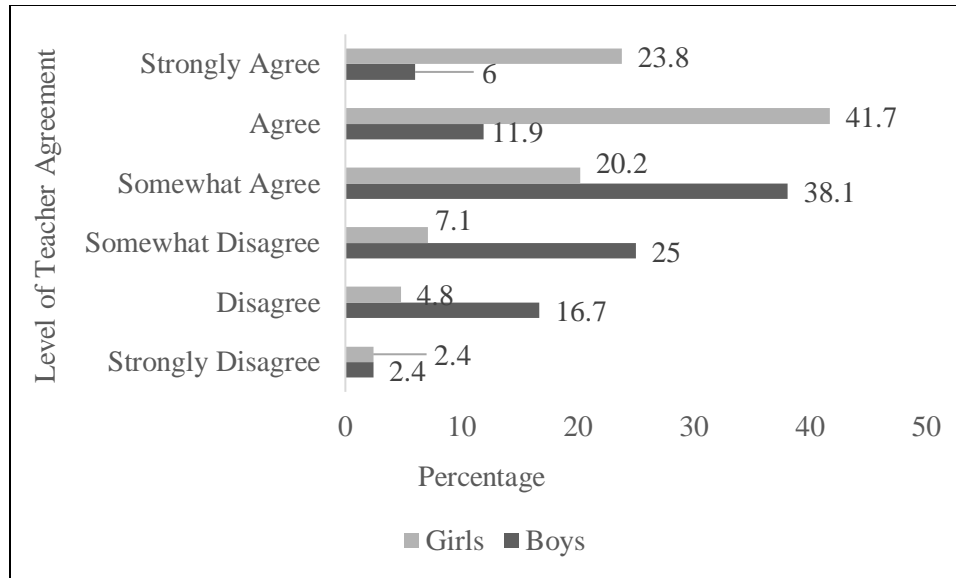


Figure 4. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ excessive clinginess after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 4 and 16.

Likert Item 5. *After divorce, male students would experience increased stress.*

Out of the 83 participants who answered this survey question, 85.71% ($n=72$), Agreed in some way male students experienced increased stress after parental divorces. Of survey respondents, 32.5% ($n=27$) Somewhat Agreed, and 28.9% ($n=24$) Agreed male students experienced increased stress. Twenty-one educators Strongly Agreed with the statement. An extremely low 1.2% ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed with the statement male students experienced increased stress after a divorce. No respondents chose Disagree as an answer. The remaining 12% ($n=10$) Somewhat Disagreed with the Likert Item 5. One respondent chose not to answer this item (see Figure 5).

Likert Item 17. *After divorce, female students would experience increased stress.*

The 84 teacher participants, for the most part, felt female students experienced increased stress following a parental divorce (see Figure 5). Twenty-two educators Strongly Agreed after a parental divorce female students experienced increased stress.

The option choice of Agree was selected by 34.5% ($n=29$) of the respondents. Of the 84 teacher participants, 28.6% ($n=24$) stated they Somewhat Agreed. Very few teachers Disagreed with the statement. The survey option of Somewhat Disagree was chosen by 7.1% ($n=6$). The remaining three participants answered with 2.4% ($n=2$) Disagreed and 1.2% ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed.

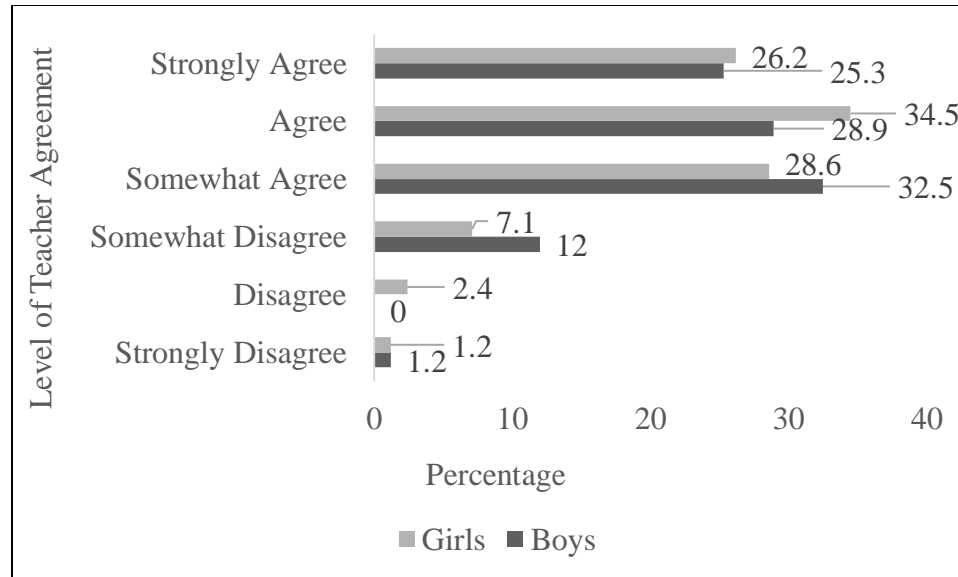


Figure 5. Teachers’ perceptions of increased stress for students after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 5 and 17.

Likert Item 6. *After divorce, male students would experience a decrease in academic performance.* As part of the survey, the researcher asked teacher participants about their perceptions of male students experiencing a decrease in academic performance succeeding a parental divorce. When responding to the survey question, 11.9% ($n=10$) of the teachers Strongly Agreed. Coincidentally, an equal number of participants, 32.1% ($n=27$), answered with Agree and Somewhat Agree. The remaining population did not agree with the Likert Item 6. Of the participants in this study, 15.5% ($n=13$) Somewhat Disagreed. Six educators, or 7.1%, indicated they Disagreed with the

statement male students experienced a decrease in academic performance. Only one respondent, 1.20% Strongly Disagreed (see Figure 6).

Likert Item 18. *After divorce, female students would experience a decrease in academic performance.* Teacher participants had differing views when asked about a decrease in academic performance (see Figure 6). When asked if female students experienced a decrease in academic performance, 9.5% ($n=8$) of respondents Strongly Agreed. The option choice of Agree was selected by 25% ($n=21$) of the teacher participants. Thirty-two, or 38.1%, of educators Somewhat Agreed. Out of the 84 participants, 20.2% ($n=17$) Somewhat Disagreed. Less than 6% ($n=5$) Disagreed with the Likert Item 18. Only 1.2% ($n=1$) of the survey sample chose Strongly Disagree when answering this question.

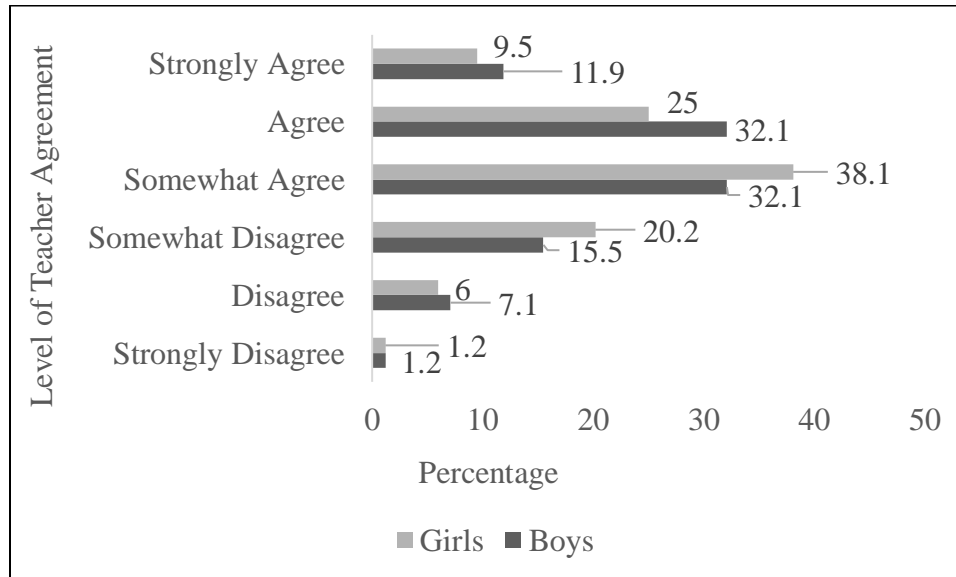


Figure 6. Teachers’ perceptions on a decrease in students’ academic performance after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 6 and 18.

Likert Item 7. *After divorce, male students would experience tardiness/attendance issues.* This Likert item viewed teachers’ perceptions of male

students experiencing tardiness and/or attendance issues. The results varied. Only 4.8% ($n=4$) of teacher participants Strongly Agreed with the statement (see Figure 7). The survey option of Agree was selected by 13.1% ($n=11$) of the teacher participants. Interestingly, the bulk of the participants chose Somewhat Agree or Somewhat Disagree. Of the teacher participants in this study, 19% ($n=16$) Disagreed, and 7.1% ($n=6$) Strongly Disagreed with the statement male students would experience tardiness after a parental divorce (see Figure 7).

Likert Item 19. *After divorce, female students would experience tardiness/attendance issues.* The teacher responses to this item varied, yet were similar to those of Likert Item 7 (see Figure 7). The option Strongly Agree was chosen by 7.1% ($n=6$). Ten teacher participants of the sample, 11.9%, Agreed female students experienced tardiness issues. The options Somewhat Agree and Somewhat Disagree scored results which paralleled Likert Item 7 related to male students in frequency of response. A total of 14.3% ($n=12$) participants Disagreed with female students experienced tardiness issues. The Strongly Disagreed response was only selected by 3.6% ($n=3$) of the participants which was somewhat lower than the responses in Likert Item 7.

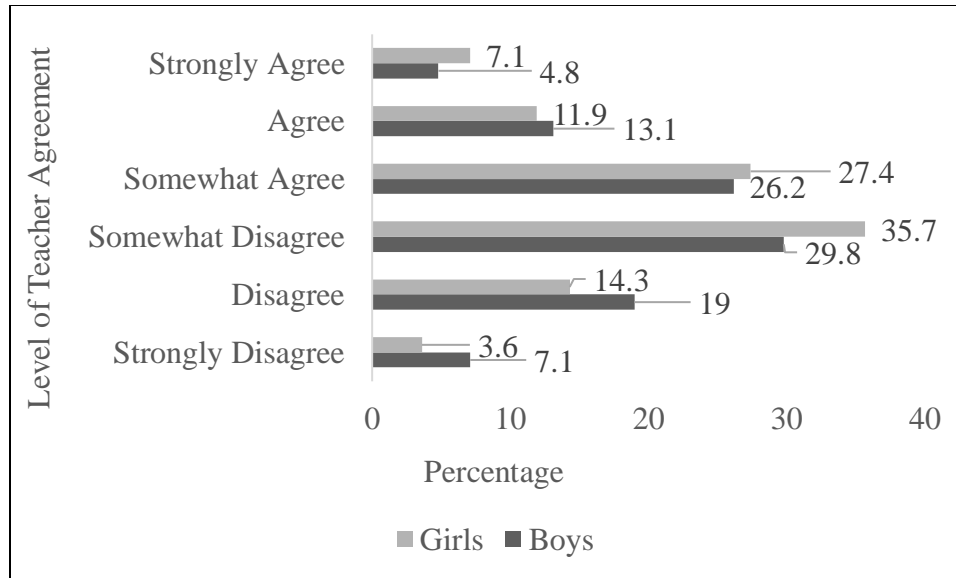


Figure 7. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ excessive tardiness/attendance after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 7 and 19.

Likert Item 8. *After divorce, male students would experience lessened interest in schoolwork.* This survey question focused on teachers’ perceptions of male students and their possible lessened interest in schoolwork after a parental divorce. Eleven of the 83 teachers who answered selected the option Strongly Agree. Of survey respondents, 25.3% ($n=21$) chose Agree (see Figure 8). The option Somewhat Agree was selected by 38.6% ($n=32$) of the population. Out of the educators surveyed, 14.5% ($n=12$) Somewhat Disagreed with male students losing interest in school work. A smaller percentage of 7.2% ($n=6$) selected Disagree when questioned. Only 1.2% ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed with the statement.

Likert Item 20. *After divorce, female students would experience lessened interest in schoolwork.* When asked if female students experienced lessened interest in schoolwork after a parental divorce, 11.9% ($n=10$) educators Strongly Agreed. A slightly higher percentage of 16.7% ($n=14$) out of 84 participants Agreed with the statement.

Identical to the results of Likert Item 8, 38.6% ($n=32$) of the population Somewhat Agreed (see Figure 8). A total of 23.8% ($n=20$) participants answered with Somewhat Disagree. Seven educators or 7.8% of the sample chose the option Disagree. The teachers' responses to this statement mirrored Likert Item 8 with 1.2% ($n=1$) of the survey sample Strongly Disagreed with this statement.

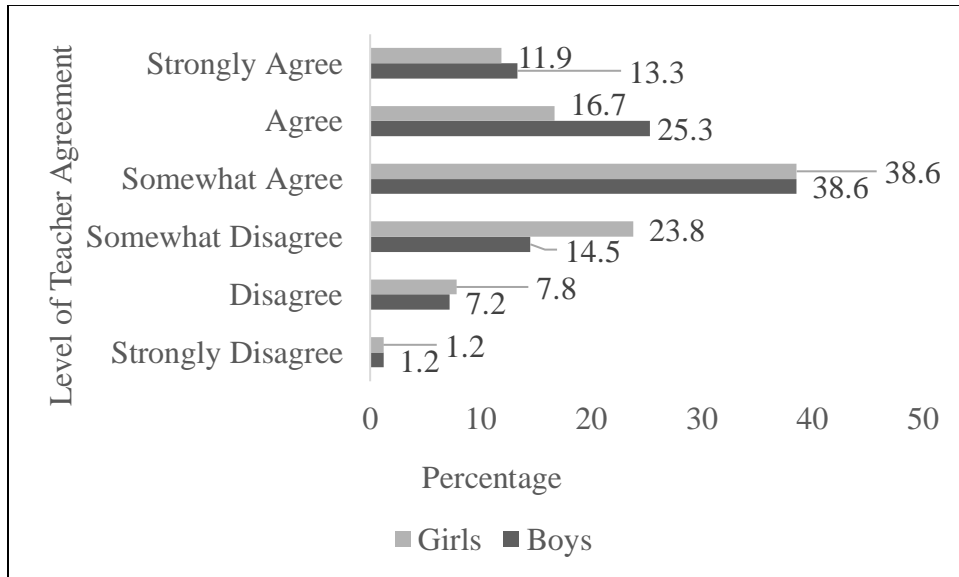


Figure 8. Teachers' perceptions of students' lessened interest in schoolwork after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 8 and 20.

Likert Item 9. After divorce, male students would experience depression. The focus of this survey question was on male students experiencing depression after a parental divorce. Of the 83 teacher responses, 8.4% ($n=7$) Strongly Agreed with the statement about male students' possible depression following divorce. The option Agree was chosen by 24.1% ($n=20$) of the survey sample. A little higher percentage of teachers, 34.9% ($n=29$) Agreed with the statement. Nineteen educators, or 22.9%, Somewhat Disagreed male students experienced depression preceding a parental divorce. The option choice of Disagree was selected by 8.4% ($n=7$) of the respondents. Only 1.2%

($n=1$) of teachers Strongly Disagreed with the Likert Item 9. One participant chose not to answer the question (see Figure 9).

Likert Item 21. *After divorce, female students would experience depression.*

The responses to this item were somewhat similar to Likert Item 9, the majority of the sample agreed with the statement (see Figure 9). When responding to this survey statement, 15.7% ($n=13$) of the population Strongly Agreed females would experience depression after a parental divorce. Of the 83 teacher responses, 34.9% ($n=29$) Agreed. The answer option Somewhat Agree was selected by 30.1% ($n=25$) of the educators. Eleven educators, or 13.3%, selected Somewhat Disagree as their answer. The remaining responses were divided into smaller percentages of 3.6% ($n=3$) Disagreed and 2.4% ($n=2$) Strongly Disagreed with Likert Item 21 related to possible female depression after parental divorce. One participant chose not to answer.

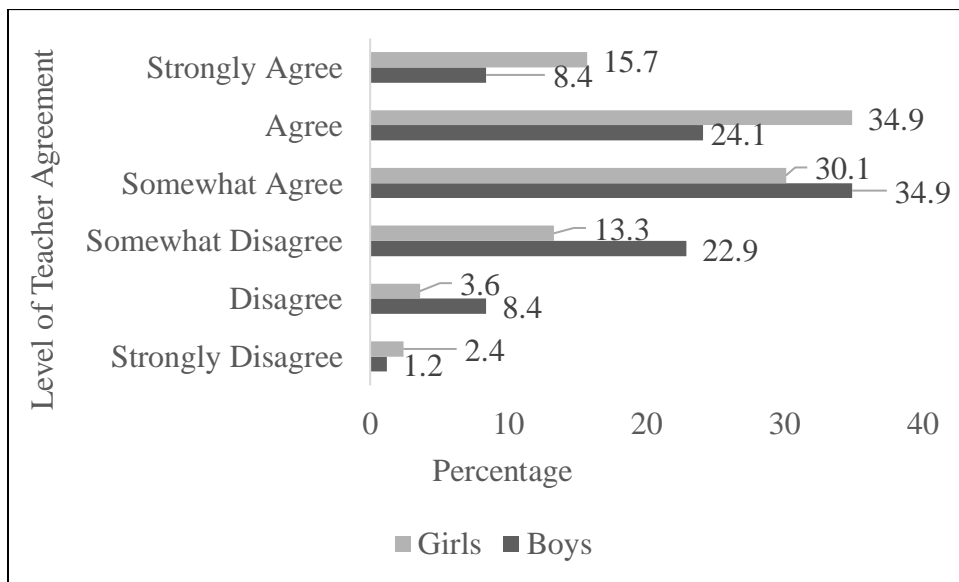


Figure 9. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ depression after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 9 and 21.

Likert Item 10. *After divorce, male students would experience anger.* This survey statement focused on male students who experienced anger post parental divorce. There were 83 responses to the survey item; one participant chose not to answer. Out of the 83 responses, only 14.5% ($n=12$) Strongly Agreed with the statement (see Figure 10). The survey choice Agree was selected by 28.9% ($n=24$) of the population. The highest percentage of the sample, 37.3% ($n=31$), Somewhat Agreed with the statement. Another 14.5% ($n=12$) Somewhat Disagreed with this Likert item. A smaller percentage of teachers were divided by the remaining answer options of Disagree, 3.6% ($n=3$), and Strongly Disagree, 1.2% ($n=1$). One participant chose not to answer this Likert Item 10.

Likert Item 22. *After divorce, female students would experience anger.* The teacher response totals were comparable to Likert Item 10 (see Figure 10). All participants chose to answer this survey item. Eight educators Strongly Agreed females would experience anger following a parental divorce. Out of the 84 respondents, 21.4% ($n=18$) Agreed with the statement. The answer choice Somewhat Agree was selected by 35.7% ($n=30$) of the sample. When asked if female students experienced anger after a parental divorce, 16.7% ($n=14$) Somewhat Disagreed and 14.3% ($n=12$) Disagreed. Only 2.4% ($n=2$) of the educators Strongly Disagreed with the statement.

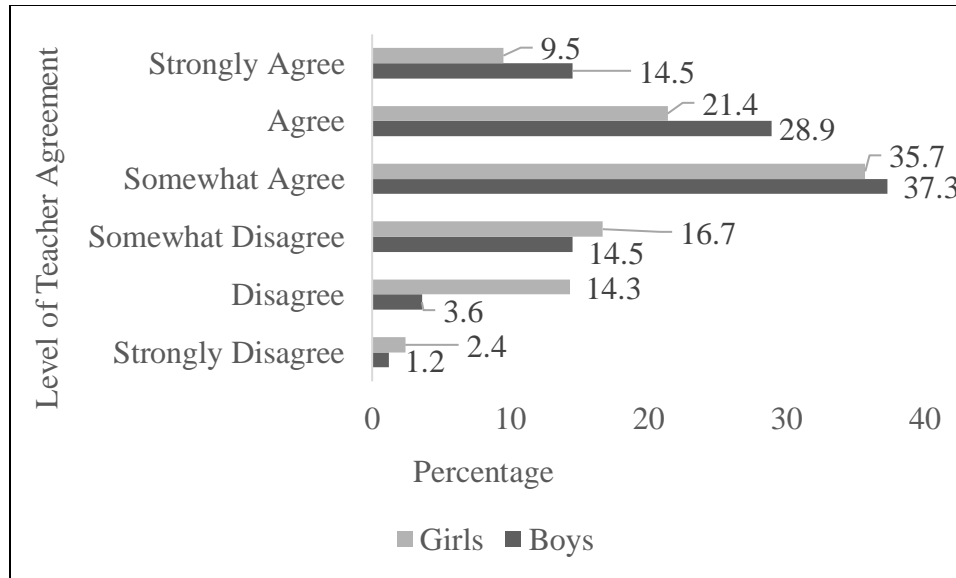


Figure 10. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ anger after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 10 and 22.

Likert Item 11. *After divorce, male students would experience increased anxiety.* Teacher participants were asked about their perceptions of male students experiencing increased anxiety after a parental divorce. All participants chose to respond to this statement. The majority of the sample agreed with the statement. A low percentage, 11.9% ($n=10$), Strongly Agreed with the Likert statement (see Figure 11). Of the 84 participants, 29.8% ($n=25$) chose Agree and 38.1% ($n=32$) selected Somewhat Agree. Very few teacher respondents disagreed. Eleven educators Somewhat Disagreed when asked if male students experienced increased anxiety. The survey option Disagree was selected by 6% ($n=5$). Only 1.2% ($n=1$) of the teacher participants Strongly Disagreed.

Likert Item 23. *After divorce, female students would experience increased anxiety.* When compared to Likert Item 11, more educators agreed, following a divorce in their family, female students experienced increased anxiety than boys following a

divorce (see Figure 11). Of the 84 teacher responses, 22.6% ($n=19$) Strongly Agreed. The choice Agree was selected by 31% ($n=26$) of the population. A total of 33.3% ($n=28$) Somewhat Agreed with the statement. The answer options of Somewhat Disagree and Disagree were both chosen by 6% ($n=5$) of the educators. A single participant, or 1.2%, Strongly Disagreed female students exhibited increased anxiety preceding a parental divorce.

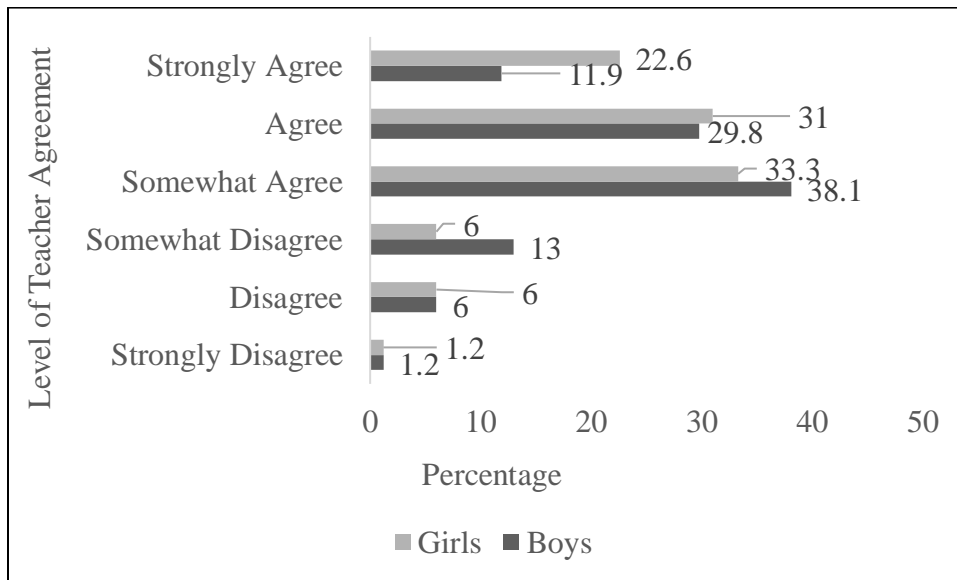


Figure 11. Teachers’ perceptions of students’ increased anxiety after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 11 and 23.

Likert Item 12. After divorce, male students would experience a decrease in academic effort. This Likert item viewed teachers’ perceptions of male students experiencing a decrease in academic effort following a parental divorce. Of the 84 responses, 9.5% ($n=8$) of the teachers Strongly Agreed with the statement. One-fourth ($n=31$) of the sample Agreed with the statement. A larger percentage, of 40.5% ($n=34$) of the survey sample, Somewhat Agreed males experienced a decrease in academic effort. The survey option Somewhat Disagree was chosen by 15.5% ($n=3$) of the

educators. Seven teachers or 8.30% of the respondents Disagreed with the statement. Only 1.2% ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed when queried about male students experiencing a decrease in academic effort (see Figure 12).

Likert Item 24. *After divorce, female students would experience a decrease in academic effort.* Responses to this survey item were comparable to Likert Item 12 (see Figure 12). Of the 84 teacher responses, 7.1% ($n=6$) Strongly Agreed female students experienced a decrease in academic effort preceding a parental divorce. When responding to this item, 16.7% ($n=14$) of the population chose the answer option Agree. The majority of the sample, 45.2% ($n=38$), Somewhat Agreed with the statement. Fifteen survey participants Somewhat Disagreed female students experienced a decrease in academic effort. A smaller percentage of 11.9% ($n=10$) Disagreed. Identical to the results of Likert item 12, 1.2% ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed with the statement.

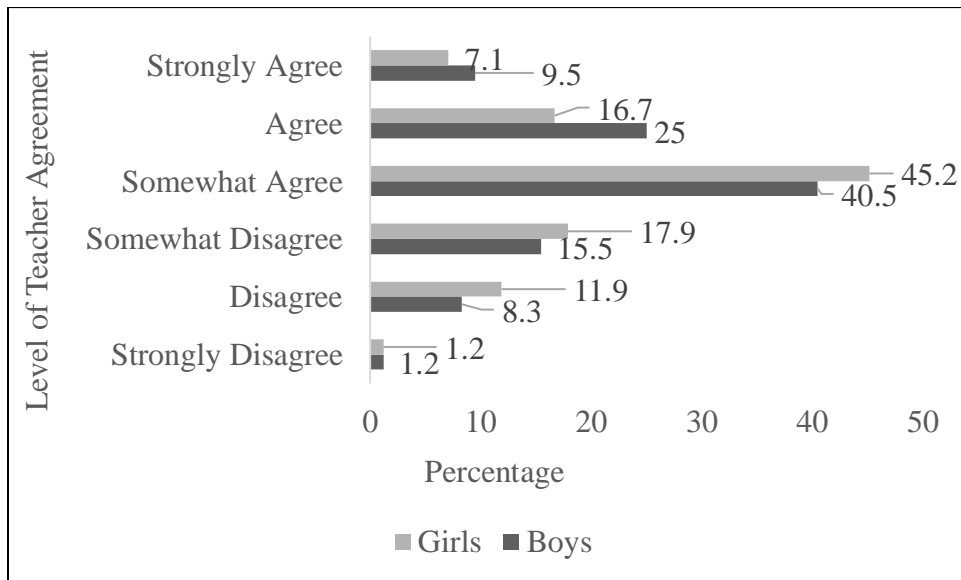


Figure 12. Teachers’ perceptions of a decrease in students’ academic effort after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Items 12 and 24.

Likert Item 25. Boys become more aggressive following a divorce than girls.

Teacher participants were asked if boys were more aggressive than girls. Only a total of 82 educators responded to this survey item (see Figure 13). Shockingly, only 9.8% ($n=8$) of the population Strongly Agreed with the statement. Out of the 82 responses, 30.5% ($n=25$) Agreed boys were more aggressive than girls. The answer choice Somewhat Agree was selected by 32.9% ($n=27$) of the teacher respondents. Thirteen participants or 15.90% of the sample, selected the option Somewhat Disagree. A smaller percentage of 7.3% ($n=6$) Disagreed with boys being more aggressive than girls following parents' divorces. The remaining responses, 3.7% ($n=3$), Strongly Disagreed with this statement. Two participants chose not to answer.

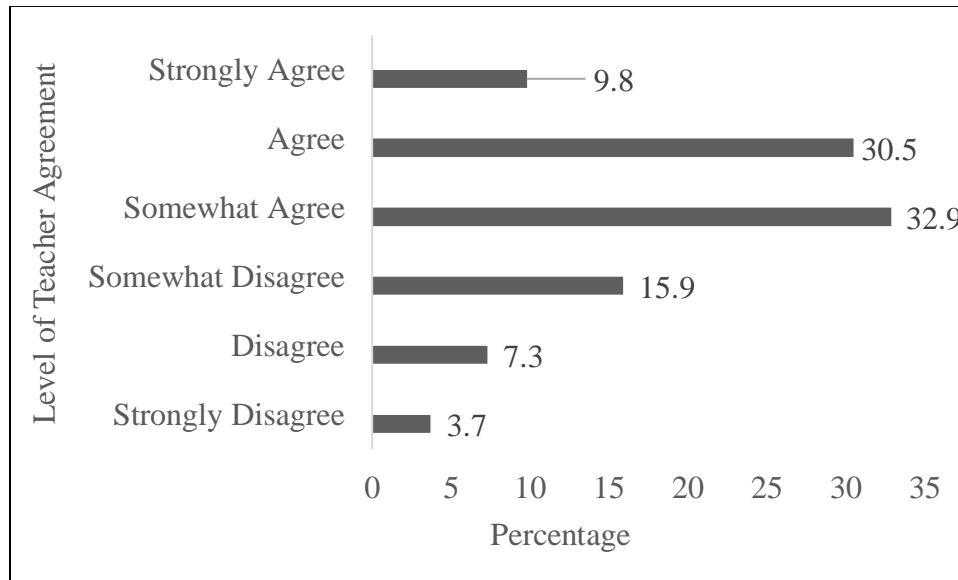


Figure 13. Teachers' perceptions of boys becoming more aggressive than girls after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 25.

Likert Item 26. Girls become more withdrawn and anxious than boys.

Educators were surveyed on their perceptions of whether girls became more withdrawn and anxious than boys. Of the 83 educators who responded to this item, 9.6% ($n=8$)

Strongly Agreed (see Figure 14). The choices Agree and Somewhat Agree were each selected by 26.5% ($n=22$) of the sample. One less teacher, 25.3% ($n=21$), selected Somewhat Disagree. Six teacher respondents or 7.20% of the sample Disagreed with the Likert statement. The answer option Strongly Disagree was selected by 4.8% ($n=4$) of the population. One educator chose not to answer Likert Item 26.

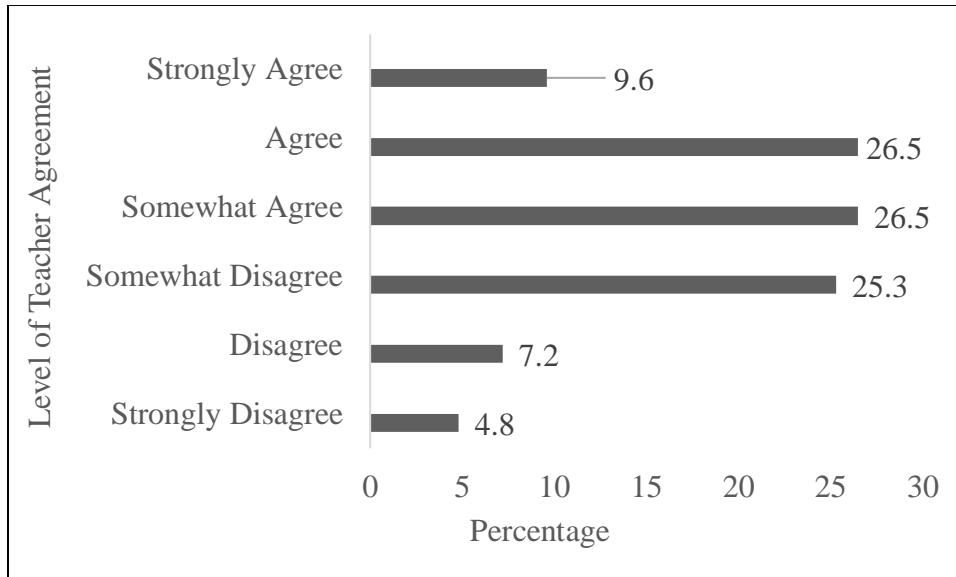


Figure 14. Teachers' perceptions of girls becoming more withdrawn and anxious after a parental divorce than boys. Data collected from Likert Item 26.

Likert Item 27. *Most children can adjust quickly after the divorce if a routine is established as soon as possible.* Teacher respondents were asked about their perceptions of the adjustments children made following a parental divorce. The answer options Strongly Agree was chosen by 19.3% ($n=16$) of the sample (see Figure 15). Seventeen teacher respondents or 20.40% of the sample Agreed most children adjusted quickly after parental divorces when a routine was established. Out of the 83 teachers who responded to this survey item, 26.5% ($n=22$) Somewhat Agreed with the statement. A total of 19.3% ($n=16$) Somewhat Disagreed. The option Disagree was selected by 13.3% ($n=11$)

of the population. An extremely low percentage, 1.2% ($n=1$), Strongly Disagreed most children adjusted quickly. One educator elected not to answer the statement.

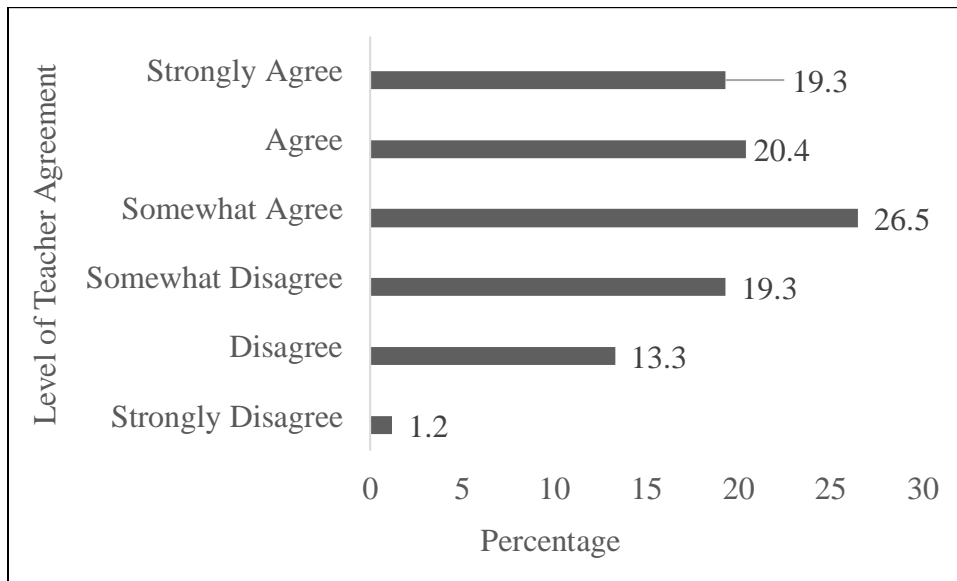


Figure 15. Teachers' perceptions of children's adjustments following a parental divorce.

Data collected from Likert Item 27.

Likert Item 28. *Few children may lack the necessary coping skills needed to comprehend and handle a parental divorce.* Teacher participants were surveyed about their perceptions of lacking the coping skills to handle a parental divorce. A total of 83 educators responded to this survey statement. The answers were split almost equally between the survey options (see Figure 16). Of the 83 respondents, 21.7% ($n=18$) Strongly Agreed children lacked coping skills. Very close in responses, 20.5% ($n=17$) chose Agree and 22.9% ($n=19$) chose Somewhat Agree. The remaining respondents Disagreed with the statement. Twelve educators, 19.3%, chose Somewhat Disagree. The Disagree was selected by 15.7% ($n=13$) of the population. A lower percentage of 4.8% ($n=4$) Strongly Disagreed with the Likert item. A single teacher participant chose not to provide an answer.

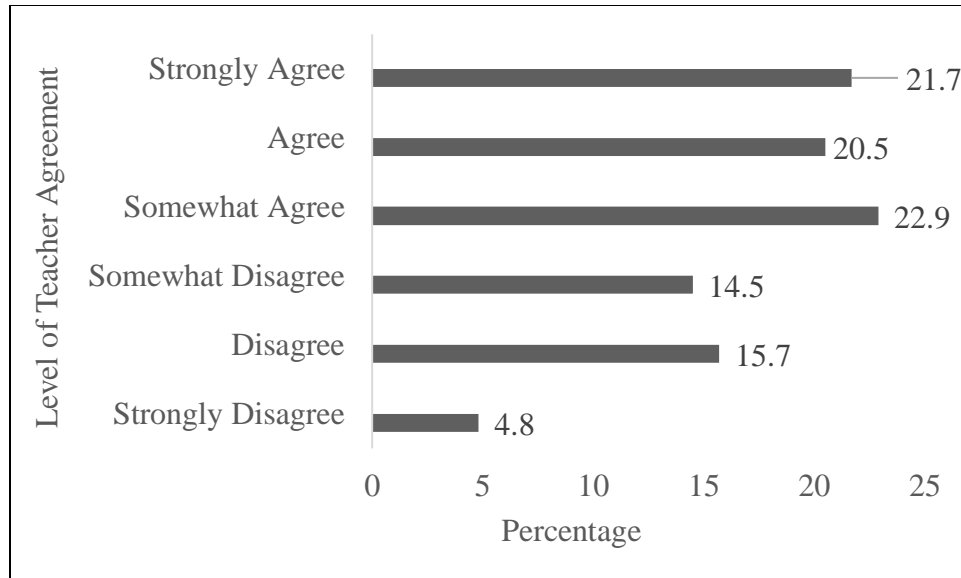


Figure 16. Teachers' perceptions of the coping skills possessed by students after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 28.

Likert Item 29. Boys experience more academic impacts than girls following a divorce. This survey question focused on whether boys experienced more academic impacts than girls. The responses to this item varied (see Figure 17). Unexpectedly, only 1.2% ($n=1$) of the responses Strongly Agreed with the statement. The option Agree was selected by 19.3% ($n=16$) of the participating educators. Out of the 83 responses, 25.3% ($n=21$) Somewhat Agreed boys experienced more academic impacts than girls. Twenty-seven teacher participants or 32.50% of the sample Somewhat Disagreed with the Likert statement. When responding to the statement, 12% ($n=10$) of the participants Disagreed and 9.6% ($n=8$) Strongly Disagreed. One educator did not provide an answer.

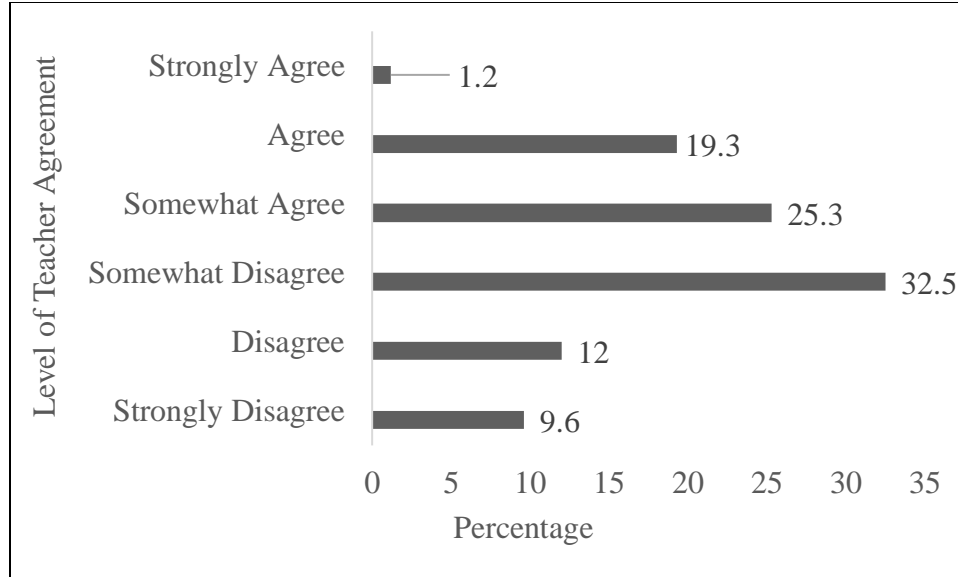


Figure 17. Teachers’ perceptions of the degree of academic impact boys experienced compared to girls. Data collected from Likert Item 29.

Likert Item 30. Boys and girls react differently to a parental divorce. This survey piece focused on whether male and female students reacted differently to parental divorce. The majority of the population agreed the two genders reacted differently to a parental divorce (see Figure 18). When this item was posed, 20.7% ($n=17$) of the sample Strongly Agreed with the statement. The answer options Agree and Somewhat Agree had identical percentages, of 28% ($n=23$). Out of the 82 teacher responses, 17.1% ($n=14$) Somewhat Disagreed. Three educators Disagreed males and females reacted differently to a parental divorce. A small 2.4% ($n=2$) Strongly Disagreed with the statement. Two educators chose not to answer the statement.

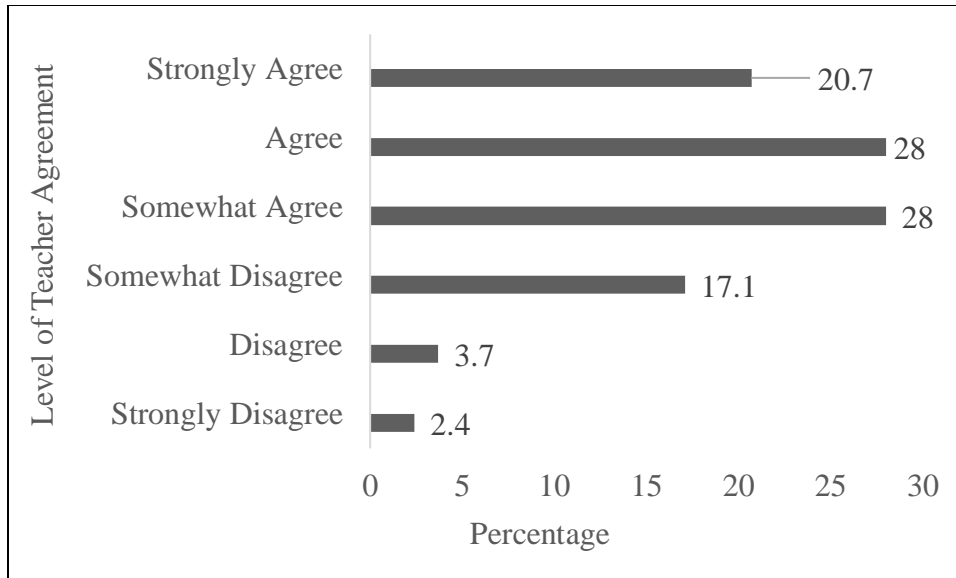


Figure 18. Teachers' perceptions of children's reactions to divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 30.

Likert Item 31. *The most critical part of most children's adjustment after the divorce is their relationship with at least one parent.* This survey item focused on whether the most critical component to children's adjustment following a divorce was having a relationship with at least one of their parents. Out of the 82 respondents who chose to answer this question, 24.4% ($n=20$) Strongly Agreed (see Figure 19). The majority of participants, 37.8% ($n=31$) Agreed the relationship with at least one of the parents was critical. The choice Somewhat Agree was selected by 17.1% ($n=14$) of the survey sample. When answering the question, 12.2% ($n=10$) Somewhat Disagreed. The few remaining teachers were divided between 4.90% ($n=4$) Disagreed and 3.70% ($n=3$) Strongly Disagreed. Two participants elected not to provide an answer.

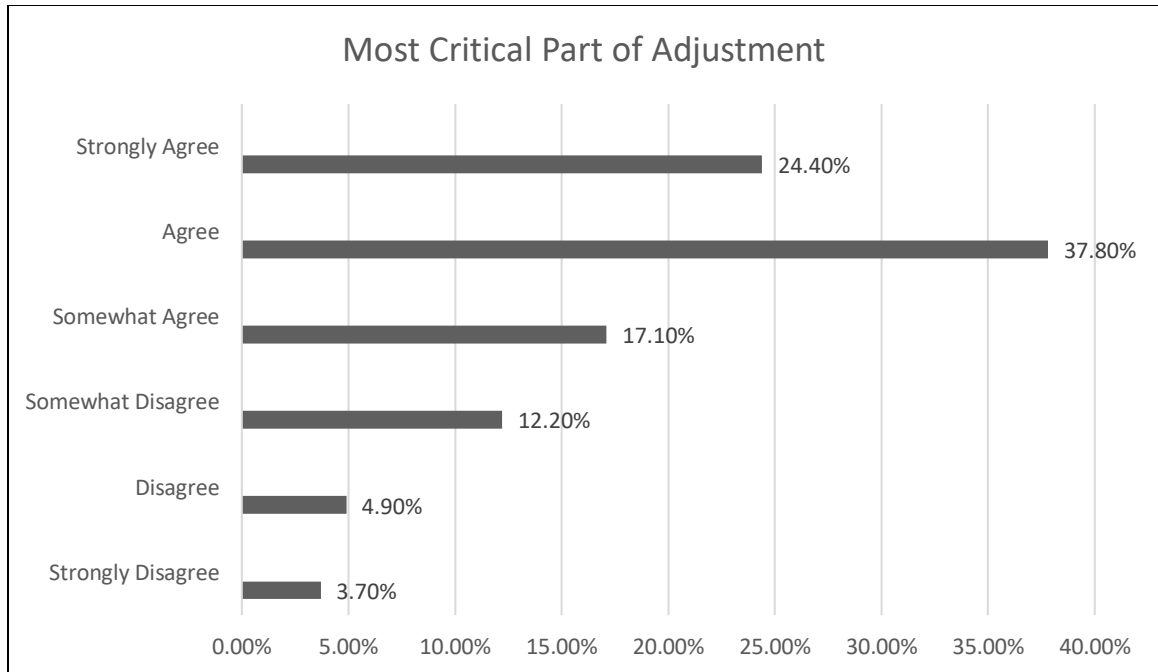


Figure 19. Teachers' perceptions on the most critical part of children's adjustment after parental divorce. Data collected from survey results.

Likert Item 32. *Girls from divorce parents experience more tardiness and attendance related issues than boys.* Teacher respondents were asked if girls had more tardiness and attendance issues than boys. The majority of the sample disagreed with the statement in some form (see Figure 20). Unexpectedly, only 1.2% ($n=1$) of the survey population Strongly Agreed. From the 83 responses, 9.6% ($n=8$) Agreed with the statement. When answering this particular survey item, 13.3% ($n=11$) of the sample Somewhat Agreed. The greatest majority of those responding chose Somewhat Disagree, 39.8% ($n=33$). The answer option Disagree was chosen by 20.5% ($n=17$) of the sample. Lastly, 15.7% ($n=13$) of the survey respondents Strongly Disagreed girls experienced more tardiness and attendance related issues than boys. One educator did not answer Likert Item 32.

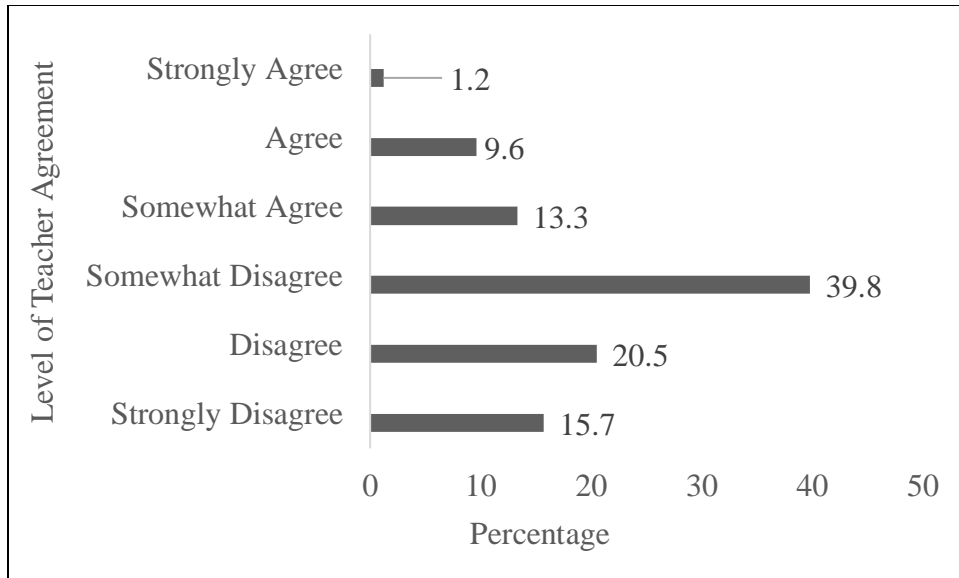


Figure 20. Teachers’ perceptions on girls’ attendance after a parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 32.

Likert Item 33. Boys may show more aggression and disobedience than girls.

The concern of boys being more aggressive and disobedient than girls was addressed in this portion of the survey. The majority of the teacher participants agreed with this topic (see Figure 21). Of survey respondents, 6.1% ($n=5$) Strongly Agreed boys were more aggressive and disobedient than girls. Out of the 82 educators who chose to answer this question, 36.6% ($n=30$) Agreed, while 28% ($n=23$) Somewhat Agreed. The survey option of Somewhat Disagree was selected by 13.4% ($n=11$) of the respondents. Five educators or 6.10% of the sample Disagreed. A slightly higher, 9.8% ($n=8$) Strongly Disagreed with the Likert statement. Two educators chose not to answer the question.

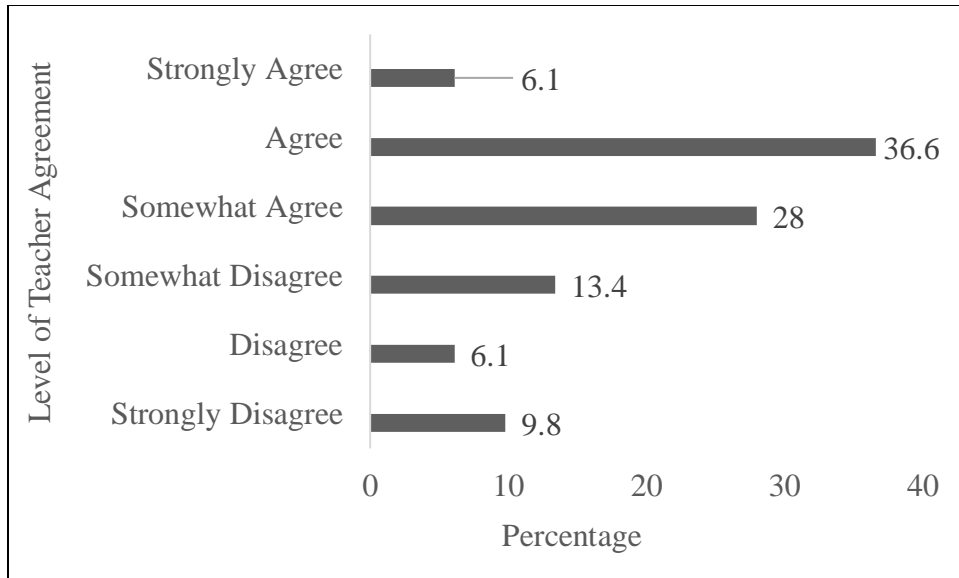


Figure 21. Teachers' perceptions of boys being more disobedient and aggressive than girls after parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 33.

Likert Item 34. *Girls may become anti-social with peers in fear of abandonment.* Educators were asked if girls became anti-social with peers after a parental divorce. The teacher responses varied. Out of the 83 participants, 6% ($n=5$) Strongly Agreed girls became anti-social (see Figure 22). A quarter of the respondents, 25.3% ($n=21$), Agreed with the statement. The choice Somewhat Agree was selected by 27.7% ($n=23$). Another quarter, 25.3% ($n=21$), Somewhat Disagreed girls became anti-social out of fear of abandonment following their parents' divorce. Educators who Disagreed made up 12% ($n=10$) of the population. A small 3.6% ($n=3$) of the survey sample Strongly Disagreed with the statement. One participant did not answer.

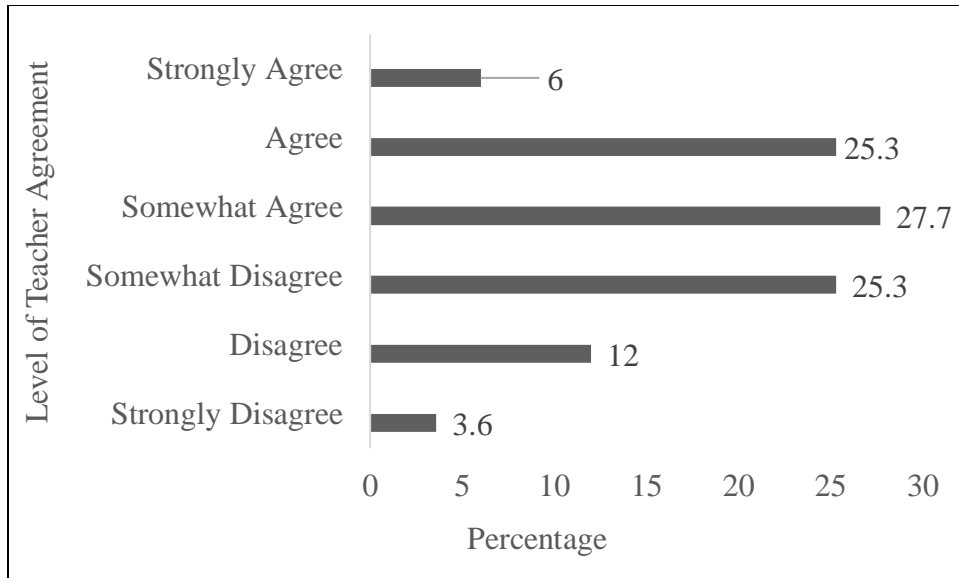


Figure 22. Teachers' perceptions of girls becoming anti-social with peers after parental divorce. Data collected from Likert Item 34.

Open-ended Question 1. *Can you share an experience(s) where you personally dealt with a child from a divorced situation in the classroom? How did this impact the classroom setting? Please note the child's gender in the situation.* A total of 71 out of 84 educators chose to answer this open-ended question. Teacher respondents noted more instances dealing with a male student than female. After analyzing the teacher participants' responses, the following trends were noted from the teachers' experiences: (a) academic struggles, (b) negative behaviors, and (c) co-parenting issues.

Academic struggles. When teacher participants reflected on personal experiences with children from a divorced household a variety of academic struggles were mentioned, such as missing work, poor grades, lack of effort, and attendance related issues. Teacher participants noted more academic issues from female students than male students. However, participant F5b outlined an occurrence with a particular male student. This educator described the student lived with his father and did not have regular contact with

his mother during the time of being in F5b's classroom. Before his parents divorced, his grades from previous years depicted him to be one of the top academic students in the class. Following his parents' divorce, his grades dropped drastically, and he struggled with learning new concepts.

Out of the 71 responses, 14.08% ($n=10$) revealed the identified student had lower grades compared to students from non-divorced households. One educator noted the student's grades varied week by week, depending on which parent the child was with. Three educators declared they observed male students from a divorced household displayed a lack of effort when completing school work. An additional three participants described male students as having more missing assignments than female students of a divorced background. Respondent D5a specified male students often lost materials in the shuffle of switching households each week. From the survey sample, 5.63% ($n=4$) depicted tardiness and attendance issues, equally split among male and female students.

Negative behaviors. While providing insight into personal experiences working with children of a divorced situation, many respondents reported instances of negative behavior including aggression, disrespect, and a variety of negative emotions. Teacher respondents described more behavioral issues from male students than female students from a divorced situation. From the 71 teacher respondents for this question, 9.86% ($n=7$) identified situations with male students of a divorced background being aggressive in the classroom. Two educators shared their experiences with male students throwing tantrums in the classroom. Out of the population, 5.63% ($n=4$) noted instances with male and female students being disrespectful. Other negative behaviors shared were lying, disruptive tendencies, and stealing.

Although they were not a negative behavior, teachers noted negative emotions children of divorce experienced in the classroom. Participants elaborated on more examples of their experiences with dealing with emotional issues from female students from a divorce household than male students. A common trend noted for both genders was students displayed high levels of anxiety in the classroom; whether it was about grades, making a parent upset, or weekly household swaps. Teachers described instances of being more in a counselor role for these particular students in order to calm their anxiety levels. Another comment common to many respondents involved depression among students, particularly with students of female gender.

Co-parenting. Co-parenting was a recurring topic throughout the analysis of responses from those surveyed with both male and female students being identified. Out of the 71 responses, 25.35% ($n=18$) mentioned the positive or negative impact co-parenting had on a child. The majority of comments were focused on the lack of co-parenting skills. Participant A3c commented,

“I feel divorce is truly what the parents make out of it. Unfortunately, with divorce we see more of the negative side effects because parents are selfish and worried more about their own feelings, and are blind to what they are doing to the children.”

Similarly, respondent A5a described an experience during a parent teacher conference. While conducting the conference, the child’s parents began arguing in front of the child. The participant noted, “The student talked openly the next day about his frustrations with the meeting and how the parents always make everything about them.”

The educator added this particular student claimed he preferred to be at school, because he did not have to deal with the stress of his parents arguing.

When answering the question, 7.04% ($n=5$) of the participants claimed the students' academics and behaviors varied due to which parent the child was living with. Teacher participant A4b claimed a particular student was grumpy and unfocused with one parent, then focused and happy with the other parent. A similar instance was described by participant B4a. The male student's academic performance decreased on days the student switched households. Not only did his academics suffer, but his behaviors altered as well. This educator described, "Once I figured out the pattern, trips to the counselor became part of our Monday morning routine and he was able to function much better." Visits to the school counselor gave this student the opportunity to discuss his feelings and frustrations, in order to relieve the negative emotions caused from switching houses.

Open-ended Question 2. *How have the number of children in your classroom from a divorced setting changed within the past five years?* Out of the 84 surveys completed, 79.76% ($n=79$) of the participants answered this question. A small portion of 7.46% ($n=5$) claimed they did not feel equipped to answer the question due to teaching less than five years. Over half, 59.70% ($n=40$), of the sample noted the number of children in the classroom from a divorced setting has increased over the past five years. Participant AKa mentioned, "The number has increased tremendously. The minority of students now come from a home with both parents." The remaining 32.84% ($n=22$) of the sample have not noticed a change in the number of children in their classrooms from a divorced setting within the past five years.

Open-ended Question 3. *Do you notice more academic or behavioral related issues from students of a divorced situation and is it affected by the gender of the child?* This survey question focused on teachers' perceptions of whether there tended to be more academic or behavioral issues from students of a divorced situation. The participants were able to state if they considered the gender of the child to be the cause of the negative impacts. Out of the 84 teacher participants, 76 chose to respond. Teacher responses for this open-ended question varied. Many respondents answered both parts of the question, while some only addressed one aspect of the question.

Out of the 76 responses, 23.68% ($n=18$) of the sample noted students from a divorced household exhibited both academic and behavioral related issues in the grade level in which the participant taught. Shockingly, only 7.89% ($n=6$) claimed to have noticed seeing more academic issues from children of divorce. Slightly higher, 28.95% ($n=22$) of the educators noticed only behavioral issues from children of divorced parents. A total of 15.79% ($n=12$) of the teacher participants pointed out they did not notice a difference between children of divorce and the other students in the classroom. A single participant, 1.32% ($n=1$) answered the question as "N/A". The remaining 23.68% ($n=18$) did not comment on the academics or behaviors of the students from a divorced household.

When dealing with the gender of the child, 28.95% ($n=22$) of the respondents noted male students exhibited more negative impacts than female students, and those were mainly described as behavioral. Out of the 76 responses, 9.21% ($n=7$) claimed females experienced more negatively related impacts of a parental divorce. Six out of the seven respondents or 85.71% of the educators mentioned the female students were not a

behavior problem, but were rather emotional and quiet. When answering, 9.21% ($n=7$) of the respondents claimed the negative impacts were affected by the gender of the child. Interestingly, however, these participants did not identify a particular gender. A total of 18.42% ($n=14$) of respondents perceived gender did not matter. These respondents all believed each instance was unique, and the impacts depended on how the parents handled the divorce. The remaining 34.21% ($n=26$) of those participating did not answer the gender portion of the question.

Open-ended Question 4. *Describe whether boys or girls openly discuss a parental divorce.* This survey question focused on teachers' perceptions of which gender willingly discussed experiences of a parental divorce. Of the 77 responses, 57.14% ($n=44$) of the educators felt girls openly discussed a parental divorce more than boys did. Many educators felt girls were better communicators in general due to emotions. Participant A2e stated, "They want to talk about what is bothering them and seek advice from others."

Eight teacher participants felt boys discussed a parental divorce more openly than girls did. Educator A5b noted boys discussed a parental divorce after some type of melt down in class, but not freely. However, 15.58% ($n=12$) of the survey sample did not feel there was a difference between the genders. These participants felt both genders openly discussed a parental divorce. Respondent F5b elaborated, "The relationship a teacher has with a child determines how much a student will discuss a parental divorce." A small percentage of educators, 2.60% ($n=2$), stated students have not discussed a parental divorce with them. There were 14.29% ($n=11$) of the survey participants who were

unsure whether gender affected students' communication pertaining to a parental divorce. The remaining 9.09% ($n=7$) did not provide an answer to this question.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine what the perceptions of teachers in grades kindergarten through eight were regarding the impact parental divorce has had on their students' academic performance and classroom behavior. The researcher used collected data to answer the two research questions. In Chapter Four, the researcher sorted through the data and described as well as displayed the results of the 34 Likert scale items and four open-ended questions. The researcher compared teachers' perceptions of male and female students to be able to determine if gender played a part in the negative impacts parental divorce may have on a kindergarten through eighth grade student. In Chapter Five, the researcher will discuss the findings of the data, draw conclusions from the data, and summarize the study. The researcher will discuss implication for practice. In addition, the researcher will recommend areas for future research on how divorce may affect students in school.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Divorce was a traumatic process for children with long-term ramifications for those involved (Leopold & Kalmijn, 2016). When compared to developed countries, the United States has had an exceptionally high divorce rate (Lehrer & Son, 2017). Parental divorce was reported to negatively influence children's academics and behaviors, especially within the first four years preceding the divorce (Arkes, 2015). These influences have manifested as depression, anxiety, and behavioral outbursts for many children (Arkes, 2015). Consequently, it has become pertinent for teachers to prepare for the wide range of negative impacts a child may experience due to the stress of a parental divorce (Guttadauro, 2013). This chapter will review the purpose of the study and research questions. Then, the researcher will present the findings from the study, conclusions, and implications for practice. Lastly, the researcher will address areas for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions of kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers on the impact parental divorce had on a children's academic and behavioral performance. Furthermore, the purpose of the study was to find whether and how parental divorce influenced each gender. The researcher electronically contacted 332 kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers from seven school districts in Mid-Missouri. There were 332 teachers recruited for this study; however, only 84 teacher participants completed the on-line survey. The survey contained 34 Likert-scale questions and four open-ended questions designed to address the research questions which guided this study. The research design for this study was a mixed-methods

approach; the 34 Likert-scale items collected quantitative data and the qualitative data was derived from the teachers' responses to the four open-ended questions.

Research Questions

In Chapter Four, the analyzed, calculated, and displayed the data collected from the 84-participating kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers. Those teachers represented seven Mid-Missouri school districts. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. Do teachers perceive there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth grade from a divorced situation based on the student's gender?

2. How does the gender of a child from a divorce situation affect his/her behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth in a school setting?

Findings

The following is a discussion of the findings of this study as they related to the research questions and review of literature surrounding the topic of effects of divorce on children in classroom settings. This study could be beneficial to current or future educators when dealing with students from a divorced household. The main impacts identified to affect children in this study were attendance issues, decrease in academic performance, and increased behavioral issues. Survey questions were gender based for the researcher to determine the degree the gender of the children involved from divorced homes played on their performance in school.

Demographic data. The researcher analyzed the results from the 84 on-line surveys received. The teacher participants were from seven districts in central Missouri

and were similar in demographics. The educators had varying years of experience, ranging from a first-year teacher to more than 15 years. From the 84 participants, 27.4% ($n=23$) had zero to five years of experience. A total of 22.6% ($n=19$) had been teaching from six and 10 years. A smaller group, 11.9% ($n=10$) had taught 11 through 15 years. The largest percentage of educators, 38.1% ($n=32$) had taught more than 15 years of teaching experience. Participants noted various educational degrees earned throughout their career. Only a single respondent held a doctorate degree. Ten participants claimed to have earned a specialist's degree. The majority of the population, 52.4% ($n=44$), held a master's degrees. The remaining 34.5% ($n=29$) held bachelor's degrees. When the participants were asked if their building had a way to identify children from a divorced household, 51.8% ($n=43$) stated yes.

Research question one. *Do teachers perceive there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth-grade from a divorced situation based on the student's gender?* Akhtar and Blue (2017) noted male and female children were influenced by their parents' divorces. To address the teacher participants' perceptions of how gender related to the students' performance in school following a divorce, the researcher invited teachers to participate in an on-line survey. Teacher participants responded to 34 Likert-scale questions and four open-ended questions designed to determine specifically the teachers' perceptions of the impact divorce had on their students' academic and behavioral performance. Data collected from this survey was divided by gender in order to provide information on male and female students. Likert-scale items 1 through 12, 25, 29, 30, and 33 related to male students. Items 13 through 24, 26, 32, and 34 pertained only to female students.

Corresponding with the survey instrument developed by Atilas et al. (2017), gender scale ratings depicting a negative impact and behavior over 50% designated the gender of the child influenced academics and behaviors. Responses under 50% proposed gender did not affect academics or behaviors in school. Likert-item 30 queried teachers on their perceptions of male and female students' reactions to a parental divorce. Two teacher participants elected not to respond to this item. Out of the 82 respondents, 76.7% ($n=63$) agreed boys and girls reacted differently to a parental divorce. The results of this data provided an answer to the researcher's first question. The results of this data did indicate the majority of teachers perceived there to be a difference in academic and behavioral performance of children aged kindergarten through eighth-grade from a divorced situation based on the students' gender.

While many educators indicated they believed gender played a part in the academic and behavioral performance of students, some did not see a correlation in the specific grade they taught. When the researcher sorted the results of open-ended question three dealing with gender having more of impact on academics or behavioral performance in school, 13.16% ($n=10$) of the sample felt academics and behavioral performance was impacted by a parental divorce, but did not mention whether gender had an effect on the outcome. A total of 43.42% ($n=33$) of the educators noted the academics and behavioral performance was impacted by the gender of the child. After sorting the responses by grade level, the researcher noticed more third through eighth-grade educators noticed a gender difference inside the classroom than kindergarten through second grade teachers reported. Out of the 76 responses, 31.58% ($n=24$) of the population did not perceive gender played a role in the academic and behavioral

performance in children of divorced homes. However, 66.67% ($n=16$) of these 24 participants, agreed with Likert-scale item 30, which stated boys and girls reacted differently to a parental divorce. Interestingly, 18.75% ($n=3$) of these 16 strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, contradicting their previous responses.

Research question two. *How is the gender of a child from a divorced situation related to his or her academic and behavioral performance in grades kindergarten through eighth-grade in a school setting?* Throughout the survey, teacher participants noted their perceptions of students who were growing up in divorced households. Likert-scale items 1-12, 25, 29, and 33 focused on the possible negative impacts parental divorce had on male students. While Likert-scale questions 13-24, 26, 32, and 34 concentrated on the negative impacts parental divorce had on female students. The remaining Likert-scale items related to children of both genders. When responding to Likert-scale item 30, kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers perceived male and female students reacted differently to a parental divorce. From the 82 responses, 76.7% ($n=63$) of the participating educators agreed with this statement. The researcher compared Likert-scale questions 1 through 12 and 13 through 24 to determine how teachers perceived similar negative academic and behavioral issues by gender.

To date, there was limited research available based upon the role the gender of children played on their effect from a parental divorce (Marcussen et al., 2015). Marcussen, Thuen, Bruun, and Hounsgaard (2015) also explained pre-existing literature based upon teacher perceptions of the negative impacts, such as attendance, aggression, and a decline in academic performance to a parental divorce based on gender contradicted one another. When compared, teacher participants answered Likert-items 1

through 12 and 13 through 24 similarly. Participating educators mostly seemed to agree with all of the Likert statements. The only Likert statement with less than 50% for both genders focused on tardiness and attendance related issues. Most teacher participants did not perceive parental divorce to influence attendance. When asked about increased aggression following a divorce, the majority of teacher participants agreed with the statement, but only when pertaining to male students. In order to determine how the students' gender affected academic and behavioral performance, the researcher examined the remaining Likert-scale items and analyzed the various responses to the four open-ended questions.

Male students. Although teachers indicated both genders experienced the academic and behavioral issues listed in Likert-scale items 1 through 12 and 13 through 24, there were discrepancies between the genders. After the researcher analyzed the data, it was evident kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers perceived more behavioral issues from male students. From the sample, 29 educators identified a specific gender they perceived to have had more negative impacts preceding a parental divorce. Out of the 29 educators, 78.86% ($n=22$) noted male students from a divorced setting displayed behavior issues. Participant A7a explained the reason he/she perceived male students had more behavioral issues was due to the fact males typically internalized their emotions which often led to other issues. From the 82 responses, 73.2% ($n=60$) perceived boys have been more aggressive than girls in the classroom following a parental divorce. Another area of difference between the way genders reacted to divorce, which educators noted dealt with disobedience in the classroom. Out of 82 respondents, 70.7% ($n=58$) of the participants felt male students were more disobedient than female students from a

divorced background. Teacher participant A4b felt boys in general exhibited more behavioral issues than females, whether they were from a divorced household or not. Bloem (2017) backed up this perception claiming boys displayed more physically aggressive behaviors than girls did.

Female students. The results tracking the negative impacts female students from divorced households experienced were similar to those of male students. While the majority of the educators perceived male students to be more aggressive, very few educators felt female students exhibited behavioral issues. However, previous literature on adolescents' behaviors in school depicted male students typically displayed more behavioral issues than girls, with or without a parental divorced background (Bjorkqvist, 2018). Therefore, this factor was not unique to the study of children from divorced homes. Belephant (2017) noted females reacted to situations based upon their emotions. In this particular study, the survey sample perceived kindergarten through eighth-grade female students to exhibit more emotion-based impacts from a parental divorce. When asked if female students were more anxious than male students following a divorce, 62.6% ($n=52$) out of 83 educators agreed. Teacher participants noted female students rarely acted out, but instead, kept to themselves. Out of 83 responses, 59% ($n=49$) of the survey sample perceived female students from a divorced background to be antisocial. Contrasting, 57.14% ($n=44$) of the 77 educators who elaborated, felt female students openly discussed a parental divorce with educators. These same educators also perceived girls to be better communicators than boys. Female students expressed their emotions more so in private conversations (Belephant, 2017).

Limitations.

This study posed areas of research limitations. The first limitation of the study was using a convenience sample. The convenience sample had the potential of not providing enough data from the participants for the researcher to analyze and answer the research questions. Another, and probably the largest limitation, became the teachers' experiences with children of divorced households. Unless voluntarily noted, the researcher did not have a means of knowing if the participant had experience dealing with both genders of children from divorced households. If an educator had experience dealing with only one particular gender of children who came from divorced homes, the data would have been skewed due to the one-sided perspective. The lack of knowledge pertaining to the household information became a third limitation to this study. Educators without a specific database to identify students from divorced households posed data limitations for the researcher. Lastly, the personal bias towards the topic of divorce was an area of concern when analyzing the open-ended questions.

Conclusions

The results of this research study characterized kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers' perceptions on the impact divorce had on both the academic and behavioral performances of children. Participants from the study represented seven school districts from five Mid-Missouri counties. The results showed teachers perceived parental divorce had a negative impact on students' academic and behavioral performance in school. More specifically, the teachers noted various responses on how the gender of a child effected the impacts of a parental divorce. Analysis of the survey results revealed teacher participants perceived there to be more negative behavioral issues from male students,

than female. Teachers noted girls experienced more emotional based impacts, such as anxiety and depression. Interestingly, educators participating in the study elaborated more often about the behavioral impacts of the children's academic struggles.

Research has shown parental divorce had a drastic impact on the overall development of many children (Weldon, 2016). Such impacts were due to the developmental stage the child was in when the parental divorce occurred (Mundahl, 2014). Parental divorce forced these children into adult situations, and these children did not possess the emotional capacity to handle it (Mundahl, 2014). With children's basic needs left unmet and their ecosystems altered, as suggested by Maslow (1954) and Bronfenbrenner (1994), students did not perform to their best abilities in the classroom. Haskins (2015) also felt when a student's family structure changed, negative consequences occurred, such as low high school graduation rates and mental health issues.

The participating educators noted the importance of positive co-parenting relationships throughout this study. Haimi and Lerner (2016) noted when a parental divorce was high in conflict, the children exhibited more behavioral issues. The participating educators seemed to have similar perceptions which supported this research. Several of the teachers elaborated on the importance of positive co-parenting. Educators noticed the more support the students had from their parents, the less negative impacts the students experienced. Participant B8a perceived students who came from a high conflict divorce situation had more academic and behavioral issues. Similarly, participant F6c believed if divorced parents were consistent and worked well together,

the children sometimes had fewer behavioral problems. These behavioral issues have often led to academic struggles later on in the students' educational career.

Educational Implications

Research has supported the notion students from divorced households have experienced greater negative academic and behavioral performance in school (Morin, 2018). The purpose of this particular study was to determine whether kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers perceived gender to also create an impact on the academic and behavioral performance of these particular students. Based upon the findings of the study, kindergarten through eighth-grade educators perceived gender did, in fact, influence students' academic and behavioral performance. Kindergarten through eighth-grade educators also perceived parental divorce had a greater negative impact on male students than female students. More specifically, the male students exhibited severe behavioral issues following a parental divorce. The data from this study left to two main implications for educators and parents. First, the school districts participating in this study needed to provide the teachers with professional development directed at working with children of divorce. Second, school districts needed to implement a divorce care program. These results could likely be generalized to school districts outside of survey sample in Missouri and perhaps in schools nationwide.

School districts needed to provide the teachers with professional development based on working with children of divorce. Most educators have worked hard to be supportive of students in their classrooms. Since the number of students facing divorce in their families continues to rise, it has become increasingly important for educators to have means of identifying these students and to have an awareness of legal

issues and implications of divorce as well as to be prepared to support the students' emotional needs (Cox & Desforges, 2017). When questioned, 48.2% ($n=40$) of the educators stated their building did not have a specific way to identify children from a divorced household. It would have been beneficial for educators to know at the beginning of the school year, which students came from a divorce household.

The survey data depicted 82.28% ($n=65$) of the population did not receive any professional development on how to deal with children of divorce. Ironically, 82.28% ($n=65$) of the educators felt training in this area would have been beneficial. A few of the educators noted a specific training focused on the legal ramifications of communication with divorced parents would have been extremely helpful throughout their careers. Professional development training on working with children of divorced backgrounds would allow educators to provide more support for these specific kids (Cox & Desforges, 2017; Scully, Stites, Roberts-king, & Barbour, 2019). This type of training and early intervention of possible pending issues could help these students to be more successful both in academics and in controlling their emotional behaviors.

School districts needed to implement a divorce care program. Another implication derived from the results of this research was related to the significance of co-parenting. Teachers perceived the co-parenting styles influenced the academics and behavioral performance of kindergarten through eighth-grade students; which was supported by substantial recent research (Becher, et al., 2019). Becher et al. (2019) noted many divorced couples and their children who attended a divorce educational program following the divorce had fewer negative impacts than those families who did not attend any post-divorce counseling programs. The designs of these programs were intended to

help prevent psychological issues in children from a divorce situation (Martinez-Pampliega, et al., 2015). Such as these have proved to be beneficial because the stress from parental conflicts often resulted in increased behavioral issues in students from divorced households (Fagan, 2014; Stallman & Ohan, 2016). Three educators out of the 84 commented about their counselor providing a divorce care class for children of divorced households. All three participants belonged to school district A. Participant A5c described the divorce care class as a small group setting for students of similar backgrounds to complete mini lessons and have an outlet for their feelings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since divorce is likely to be a factor in the lives of many children, there continues to be a need for additional research. This study focused on whether gender was a factor in how a child performed or behaved in school. A consideration which could be a variable to explore in future research could be the impact the children's family might have on the academic and behavioral performance in school. Another suggestion for additional research would be a comparison of schools which utilized divorce care programs to schools which did not implement such programs. Lastly, future research would benefit from would be an examination of the impact socio-economic status had on the academic and behavioral performance of children from divorced households.

Family situation. According to the American College of Pediatricians (2014), one must consider situational characteristics, such as family structure, when assessing the impact parental divorce might have on children. Family structure has played a key role in children's well-being (Salafia, 2014). A factor to research in the future could be a comparison study based on household size. The research could try to determine whether

children who came from larger families experienced more academic and behavioral issues in school compared to only children. By comparing data from these families, it would show educators the importance of providing one-on-one interaction opportunities for these children.

Divorce care programs. Data collected from school district A suggested this school had a divorce-care program in place. The comments suggested the counselor in this school offered classes for students with divorced parents. A review of this and similar programs could provide a strong body of research which could be beneficial to other schools who have students who face similar problems. Future researchers could complete a comparison study between schools which utilize a program such as this, compared to schools who do not have special programs in place to address the issues of their students of divorce. By comparing data from these schools, it would show administrators whether a divorce-care program impacted the students' academics and behavioral performance. If so, it could support the need for districts to implement divorce-care programs for all children of divorced situations, with a signed parent consent. This type of research could also be extended to explore the need for programs addressing students who face other life event issues like the loss of a parent or major relocations.

Socio-economic status. Sharma (2015) found divorce for many families often resulted in a socio-economic status change due to the families experiencing a split in their income. Unfortunately, many educators have perceived some students from lower income statuses will perform poorly in school, and have fueled the perception with their actions toward children. While extensive research was conducted on the impact socio-

economic status has had on students' academic performance, a research study centered on how this new status imposed as a result of divorce has impacted children would be helpful to school districts which have high numbers of students in this situation.

Although, data collection for a study of this nature would be difficult to collect, the results would provide insight to educators. The sensitivity, confidentiality, and availability of the information would make this study difficult to do. Yet the topic could render valuable results for educators nationwide.

Summary

The purpose and aim of this study was to explore the kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers' perceptions on the impact divorce had on a children's academic and behavioral performance, with a particular focus on impacts related to the children's gender. The researcher implemented a mixed-methods approach to obtain data from the educators. The on-line survey distributed to 332 educators contained 34 Likert-scale statements and four open-ended questions, which dealt with various negative academic and behavioral impacts a student may experience after a parental divorce.

Eighty-four teachers responded by completing this survey. The results of the study showed teachers perceived a difference in academic and behavioral performance of kindergarten through eighth-graders from divorced situations based on the students' gender. From the survey sample, more than half, 76.7% ($n=63$) of the educators perceived boys and girls reacted differently to a parental divorce. Overall, educators perceived there to be more behavioral issues than academic, with the majority issues mentioned directed towards male students.

One major area of concern mentioned by the respondents throughout the survey was related to co-parenting. Most educators felt much of the negative impact students experienced occurred due to the absence of co-parenting between the divorced couples. A lack of co-parenting knowledge on the parents' part and how to communicate with parents on teachers' part may be the leading cause to the severe negative behaviors males faced and emotional behaviors exhibited by female students. The implementation of divorce-care classes could be essential to ending the negative academic and behavioral issues children of divorce situations experienced. Thus, improving teachers' perceptions of children from divorced households.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Kindergarten through 8th Grade

Survey Questions:

Below is the print version of Atilas, Oliver, and Brosi’s (2017) Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale (PCDS). The researcher will use the on-line survey tool, Google forms, to electronically administer the survey to participants.

School District _____

(This information will only be used for the researcher. Your identity will be kept secure through a coded system.)

Grade level you currently teach _____

Does your school have a way to identify children from a divorced household? Yes or No

Please provide information on the professional development training your school offers educators on working with children from a divorced background. If there are no trainings, please state how necessary you feel a training on this area would be for teachers.

How many years have you taught?

___ 1-5

___ 6-10

___ 11-15

___ more than 15

Educational Background

___ Bachelor’s Degree

___ Master’s Degree

___ Specialist’s Degree

___ Doctorate

Perceptions of Children of Divorce Scale

Based on the current grade level you teach, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate number to the right of each statement pertaining to children following the events of a divorce.

After divorce, male students would experience:	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Heightened irritability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Physical aggression towards self or others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased temper tantrums	1	2	3	4	5	6
Excessive clinginess	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
Decrease in academic performance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tardiness/ Attendance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lessened interest in schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6
Depression	1	2	3	4	5	6
Anger	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased anxiety	1	2	3	4	5	6
Decrease in academic effort	1	2	3	4	5	6

After divorce, female students would experience:	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Heightened irritability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Physical aggression towards self or others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased temper tantrums	1	2	3	4	5	6
Excessive clinginess	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
Decrease in academic performance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tardiness/ Attendance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lessened interest in schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6
Depression	1	2	3	4	5	6
Anger	1	2	3	4	5	6
Increased anxiety	1	2	3	4	5	6
Decrease in academic effort	1	2	3	4	5	6

Based on your experiences as a teacher respond to the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Boys become more aggressive following a divorce than girls may.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Girls become more withdrawn and anxious than boys.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Most children adjust quickly after the divorce if a routine is established as soon as possible.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Few children lack the necessary coping skills needed to comprehend and handle a parental divorce.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Boys experience more academic impacts than girls following a divorce.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Boys and girls react differently to a parental divorce.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The most critical part of a child's adjustment after the divorce is his or her relationship with at least one parent.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Girls from divorced parents experience more tardiness and attendance related issues than boys.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Boys show more aggression and disobedience than girls.					
1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Girls become anti-social with peers in fear of abandonment.					
1	2	3	4	5	6

For the following open-ended questions, please write a response based on your experiences within the past five years with children from a divorced situation. Please be open and honest with your answers.

1. Can you share an experience(s) where you personally dealt with a child from a divorced situation in the classroom? How did this impact the classroom setting?
Please note the child's gender in the situation.
2. How have the number of children from a divorced setting changed in your classroom within the past five years?
3. Do you notice more academic or behavioral issues from students of a divorced situation and is it effected by the gender of the child?
4. Describe whether more boys or girls openly discuss a parental divorce.

QR Code for Survey:



Appendix B

Permission to use Survey

From: Amanda Lukefahr

Sent: June 27, 2017

To: Julia Atiles

Subject: EDD

Amanda Lukefahr
Lindenwood University
Education Department

Dear Dr. Atiles,

I am a doctoral student from Lindenwood University writing my dissertation on the impact divorce has on a child's academic and behavioral performance in grades K-8. I will also be looking into how the gender of the child impact these results. I will be writing my dissertation under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Pamela Spooner.

I would like your permission to use the Perceptions of Children of Divorce scale, from the research completed with Mallory Oliver and Jennifer Carnley. I would like to use your scale as my instrument in my research study through a Google Survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the survey only for my research study.
- I will cite the survey in APA in my references.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.
- I will add two open ended questions to allow for qualitative data.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me

through e-mail: alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us or alukefahr09@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time,

Amanda Lukefahr

\

From: Julia Atiles

Date: July 5, 2017

Subject: Re: EDD

To: Amanda Lukefahr

Dear Amanda:

Neither Mallory nor I object to you using the Perceptions of Children of Divorce scale. We do ask that you provide credit through your citations and references.

We are glad to hear someone is interested in expanding research in that area. The thesis work was published in the Educational Research Quarterly.

Atiles, J.T., Oliver, M., & Brosi, M. (2017). Preservice teachers' understanding of children of divorced families and relationship to their efficacy. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 40(3), 25-49.

Do not hesitate to contact either one of us if you have any additional questions.

Best Wishes,

Julia Atiles

From: Amanda Lukefahr

Date: June 27, 2018

Subject: Re: EDD

To: Julia Atiles

Dear Dr. Atiles,

I contacted you last summer about using your instrumentation tool, Perceptions of Divorce. After getting further into my research study and developing it, I have noticed the tool is not 100% fitting. I was wondering if it would be okay if I did the following in order to better suit my particular case:

- Convert the paper version to a Google Survey (for convenience).
- Change the singular “child” to “children”.
- Adjust the Likert scale to be more based on gender (ex: After divorce, children of a particular gender would experience heightened irritability.).
- Change my two open-ended questions to five to avoid doing one-one interviews.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate by replying to me through e-mail:

alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us or alukefahr09@gmail.com

Thank you for your time,

Amanda Lukefahr

From: Julia Atilas

Date: June 28, 2018

Subject: Re: EDD

To: Amanda Lukefahr

Amanda,

You are welcome to make the changes you propose to the scale. Would you mind sharing your final version when you have it?

Julia Atilas

Appendix CRecruitment Letter to K-8th Grade Teachers**LINDENWOOD****INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

A Mixed-Methods Study of Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact Gender Plays on the Academic and Emotional Behavior of Students Involved
in Divorce

Principal Investigator: Amanda Lukefahr

Telephone: 573-202-9412 E-mail: alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us

Participant _____ Contact Information: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Amanda Lukefahr under the guidance of Dr. Pamela Spooner. The purpose of this research is to find if and how parental divorce affects boys and girls behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, despite conflicting previous research on the topic.
2. Your participation will involve completing a short survey on the perceptions of divorce. There will be 34 Likert-style questions and 4 open-ended questions. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey. Approximately 332 teachers from 7 school districts will be involved in this research.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about the impact divorce has on students in kindergarten through eighth grade and may help society.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may contact the Investigator, Amanda Lukefahr (alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us) or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Pamela Spooner (pspooner@lindenwood.edu). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Interim Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Investigator Printed Name

By clicking the link below, I confirm I have read this form and decided I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates I am at least 18 years of age.

<https://goo.gl/sZYShd>

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window.

Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix D

E-mail Letter to Superintendents

Amanda Lukefahr
Ed. D Student
alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us
9-26-17

Dear _____,

My name is Amanda Lukefahr, and I am an Ed. D student at Lindenwood University. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study in your district following IRB approval. The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation involves exploring of the impact of divorce on students' academics and behavior in kindergarten through eighth grades and whether gender plays a role on this impact. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Pamela Spooner and Dr. Jodi Elder of Lindenwood University.

I am hereby seeking your consent to contact the building principals in your district, for the purpose of surveying potential participants who are teachers in grades Kindergarten through eighth following IRB approval. If approval is granted, teacher participants will complete a Google survey based on their experiences with students from a divorced situation. The survey process should take no longer than ten minutes. Participants will remain anonymous through a coding system. No costs will be incurred by the district or anyone participating.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have. You may contact me at alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us. If you agree, kindly respond in e-mail form. Thank you for your time and consideration in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Lukefahr
Lindenwood University

Appendix E

E-mail Letter to Building Principals

Amanda Lukefahr
Ed. D Student
alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us

TBA

Dear _____,

My name is Amanda Lukefahr, and I am an Ed. D student at Lindenwood University. I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study within your building. I have previously been granted permission by your superintendent to conduct the research within the district. However, it is your choice if you wish for your building to participate. The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation involves exploring of the impact of divorce on students' academics and behavior in kindergarten through eighth grades and whether gender plays a role on this impact. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Pamela Spooner of Lindenwood University.

I am hereby seeking your consent to contact the teachers in your building, for the purpose of surveying potential participants who are teaching in grades Kindergarten through eighth. If approval is granted, teacher participants will complete a Google survey based on their experiences with students from a divorced situation. The survey process should take no longer than ten minutes. Participants will remain anonymous through a coding system. No costs will be incurred by the district or anyone participating.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have. You may contact me at alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us. If you agree, kindly respond in e-mail form. Thank you for your time and consideration in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Lukefahr
Lindenwood University

Appendix F

Reminder E-mail to Teachers in Grades K-8

Dear _____,

This is a reminder the on-line Google link for the Perceptions of Divorce survey will close in one and a half weeks. Below you will find the initial survey information sheet which details the survey as well as the survey link. Thank you for your time and considerations.

Sincerely,

Amanda Lukefahr

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

A Mixed-Methods Study of Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact Gender Plays on the Academic and Emotional Behavior of Students Involved in Divorce

Principal Investigator: Amanda Lukefahr

Telephone: 573-202-9412 E-mail: alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us

Participant _____ Contact Information: _____

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2. Participation will involve completing a short survey on the perceptions of divorce. There will be 34 Likert-style questions and 4 open-ended questions. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey. Approximately 332 teachers from 7 school districts will be involved in this research.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about the impact divorce has on students in kindergarten through eighth grade and may help society.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may contact the Investigator, Amanda Lukefahr (alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us) or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Pamela Spooner (pspooner@lindenwood.edu). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Interim Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Participant's Printed Name

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Investigator Printed Name

Date

By clicking the link below, I confirm I have read this form and decided I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates I am at least 18 years of age.

<https://goo.gl/sZYShd>

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window.

Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix G

Survey Extension Letter

Dear _____,

The initial survey did not reach the number of participants required, in order for the study to be valid. The study will be extended another week, in hopes of reaching the minimum number of participants required. Below you will find the initial survey information sheet, which details the survey as well as the survey link. Thank you for your time and considerations.

Sincerely,

Amanda Lukefahr

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

A Mixed-Methods Study of Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact Gender Plays on the Academic and Emotional Behavior of Students Involved in Divorce

Principal Investigator: Amanda Lukefahr

Telephone: 573-202-9412 E-mail: alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us

Participant _____ Contact Information: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Amanda Lukefahr under the guidance of Dr. Pamela Spooner. The purpose of this research is to find if and how parental divorce affects boys and girls behavioral and academic performance in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, despite conflicting previous research on the topic.
2. Your participation will involve completing a short survey on the perceptions of divorce. There will be 34 Likert-style questions and 4 open-ended questions. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey. Approximately 332 teachers from 7 school districts will be involved in this research.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about the impact divorce has on students in kindergarten through eighth grade and may help society.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may contact the Investigator, Amanda Lukefahr (alukefahr@rolla.k12.mo.us) or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Pamela Spooner (pspooner@lindenwood.edu). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Interim Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

 Participant's Signature

 Date

 Participant's Printed Name

 Signature of Principal Investigator

 Date

 Investigator Printed Name

By clicking the link below, I confirm I have read this form and decided I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates I am at least 18 years of age.

<https://goo.gl/sZYShd>

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window.

Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.