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A Survey of Teachers' Perceptions Concerning the Single Parent Child

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A SURVEY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING
THE SINGLE PARENT CHILD

BY
MARGARET E. HUEBNER



Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts in Education degree
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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Education, Lindenwood College, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Education degree.

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A special thanks to Dr. Henderson and Dr. Donovan for their constant positive reinforcement and support; to my family for their patience and encouragement; to Racom Systems, Inc., for typing this paper. A special thanks also to the children of single parents who have captured my heart.

ABSTRACT

This impact of parental divorce on childrens' adjustment has become the concern of many educators. Family life and childhood socialization has been continually redefined due to this marital disruption phenomenon. Since the structure of the contemporary American family, composed of mother, father, and children has changed, educators need to be aware of the special needs and adjustments necessary for the children.

The purpose of this study was to determine by a survey if children from single parent homes were perceived in a more negative way, by their teachers, than children from intact homes. If children from single parent homes were perceived in a more negative way than children from intact homes, then their self-concept would be diminished by these negative messages. A survey devised by Mary Lou Fuller (1984) was revised and used with her permission. This survey consisted of 24 questions regarding 12 positive and 12 negative behaviors as most apt to be behaviors of children from intact families, single parent families or if no difference was seen between the two groups of children.

The groups of teachers used in this survey were:

Teachers from public and private schools. Teachers with 10 years or less experience and 11 years or more experience. Teachers who had no single parent experience and teachers who had single parent experience. The results of the answers to the 12 positive behaviors and 12 negative behaviors were computed and percentages were tabulated. Then the results of each individuals' responses were tallied and the mean score was found, then a t-test was computed.

The results of this study seemed to reveal that children from single parent homes are perceived in a more negative way than children from intact homes by some groups of teachers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION..... 1

 Significance of the Problem and
 Justification for Investigating It..... 3

 Hypotheses..... 6

 Summary..... 7

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..... 8

 Divorce: How Adults Have Been Affected..... 8

 Divorce: How Children are Affected..... 11

 Divorce: How the Child is Affected In School. 16

 Divorce: How Schools and the Teachers Can
 Affect Children of Single Parents... 24

III. PURPOSE..... 30

 Questionnaire..... 31

 Directions for Completing the Survey..... 39

 Population..... 40

 Summary..... 43

IV. ANALYSIS..... 44

V. CONCLUSIONS..... 61

APPENDICES..... 67

 A. Letter to Mary Lou Fuller..... 67

 B. Permission From Mary Lou Fuller..... 69

 C. Letter to Dear Colleague..... 71

 D. Survey..... 73

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 77

VITA PAGE..... 84

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Percentages for ALL Groups	45
2.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Percentages On Positive Items Given By Public and Private School Teachers.....	49
3.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Responses On Negative Items Given by Public and Private School Teachers.....	50
4.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Responses On Positive Behavior Items By Teachers With 10 Years or Less Experience and Teachers With 11 Years or More Experience.....	52
5.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Responses on Negative Behavior Items By Teachers With 10 Years Or Less Experience and Teachers with 11 years Or More Experience.....	53
6.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Responses On Positive Items By Teachers With Single Parent Experience and Teachers with No Single Parent Experience.....	57
7.	<u>t</u> -Test of Mean Responses On Negative Items By teachers With Single Parent Experience and Teachers With No Single Parent Experience.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

1.	Positive Behaviors by Family Types.....	47
2.	Negative Behaviors by Family Types.....	47
3.	Positive Behaviors by Family Types.....	51
4.	Negative Behaviors by Family Types.....	51
5.	Positive Behaviors by Family Types.....	55
6.	Negative Behaviors by Family Types.....	55

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Family configurations have changed radically in the United States in recent decades. Whereas single parent households were once a small minority of this country's population, such is not the case today. Currently, the divorce rate in this country is the highest recorded anywhere with about half the marriages ending in divorce. Nearly 50% of the children now being born will live in a single parent household before the age of eighteen (Garwin, 1984).

Single parent homes are created not only by divorce but by the death of spouses and the birth of children to unmarried mothers. The latter phenomenon is also growing at a staggering pace. There are now more unmarried mothers with children than widowed mothers. However, by far the greatest number of single parent homes are a consequence of divorce (Brown, 1980).

Hozman and Froiland (1977) suggested the experience of losing a parent through divorce is similar to that of losing a parent through death. They concluded that the Kubler-Ross model for dealing with loss through death also applied to loss through divorce. In this model, children go through five stages as they learn to accept loss of a parent. These stages are, 1) denial,

2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression and, 5) acceptance.

Anthony (1984) and Hetherington and Cox (1978) cautioned against expecting all children and parents to react the same way. Each individual's behavior depends upon his or her unique personality, experiences, and the support system available.

Although single parent children still represent a minority of students in each classroom, it is necessary for the teacher to be aware of how this factor affects the schools. Teachers have involuntarily become involved in the trauma of single parent children as they must work with them daily. If the perception of the teacher toward the single parent child is negative, it may hinder the single parent child's ability to achieve and build a positive self-concept. Teachers' perceptions of the student result in expectations that Brophy (1977) called self-fulfilling prophecies; that is, "individuals [children] tend to perceive and attempt to conform to the expectations that significant others [e.g., teachers] hold for them" (p. 580). Teachers' perceptions of the single parent child are the focus of this paper. The research is designed to see if the single parent child is viewed in a more negative way than children from intact families.

Significance of the Problem and Justification for Investigating It

A child does not leave his or her worries at home when he or she arrives at school. If a child of a single parent has a new situation to deal with, such as his or her parent is beginning to date, he or she will bring these concerns to school. This added stress carries with it new challenges for teachers. Teachers can add to this stress by their lack of understanding or lack of concern for the child. Teachers can alleviate some of this stress by being empathetic and understanding.

Research by Fuller (1984) suggested that teachers perceive children from single parent homes in a more negative manner than children from intact homes. Fuller (1986) developed a 25-item questionnaire to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of the behavior of students from intact and single parent homes. Observable school behaviors (called traits) were selected from items listed on report cards, in folders containing cumulative data, and on counselor-referral forms. A review of the traits by an elementary school teacher, a school counselor, and an elementary principal indicated that there were 19 positive and six negative behaviors. Although literature on classroom behavior of children from single parent homes was

sketchy, Fuller suggested the following hypotheses:

- (a) Teachers perceive students from intact families as exhibiting a greater number of positive school behaviors than do children from single parent families,
- (b) teachers perceive students from single parent families as exhibiting a greater number of negative behaviors than do children from intact families,
- (c) teachers age 35 or less will perceive students from single parent families more positively than will those who are older than 35, and
- (d) teachers who have been or are single parents will perceive children from single-parent families more positively than those who have no experience as a single parent.

The participants in Fuller's study were 117 certified classroom and resource teachers from four of the five schools in a southwestern urban school district eligible to participate in the study. The district was in a lower middle and middle-class neighborhood containing a large population of children from both single parent and intact-parent homes.

Fuller's study demonstrated that elementary school teachers from this district perceived the school behaviors of children from intact homes more positively than they did children from single parent homes. Conversely, children from single parent homes were viewed as exhibiting more negative school behaviors

than children from intact homes. Finally, the age of the teachers seemed to influence their perceptions. Teachers 36 and over were more extreme than their younger colleagues in attributing negative behaviors to children from single parent families, whereas teachers 35 and younger were more likely to attribute positive behaviors to these same children. Teachers' experiences as single parents were non-significant.

In a study by Santiock and Tracy (1978), two groups of teachers viewed a videotape depicting the social interaction of an eight-year-old boy. One group was told the boy's parents were divorced; the other group that his home was intact. Teachers rated the child of divorce more negatively on happiness, emotional adjustment, and coping with stress.

In view of Fuller's research as well as other studies, it was felt that more research was needed. If single parent children were viewed in a more negative way than children from intact homes, it seemed this could be an underlying cause for negative effects concerning the single parent child found in academic achievement, emotional adjustment, self-concept and behavior. In this study the survey used by Fuller (1986) was examined in the light of additional literature on the subject of single parent children. With Ms. Fuller's permission the survey she developed was used

in a slightly altered form. (see Chapter III for details.)

Comparisons used in this survey were:

1. Public school teachers and private school teachers.
2. Teachers of both groups with 10 or less years experience and 11 or more years experience.
3. Teachers of both groups with personal single parent experience as a child or as an adult and teachers with no direct single parent experience. The first two comparisons were not used in the first survey and the third comparison may differ due to the different population area.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There would be no difference between the private and the public school teachers' perceptions of children from single parent homes and intact homes.
2. There would be no difference between the teacher with 10 years or less experience and the teacher with 11 years or more experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home.

3. There would be no difference between the teacher with single parent experience and the teacher with no single parent experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home.

Summary

The increasing number of single parent children has become evident in elementary classrooms. This increase has caused teachers to become involved in working with children from single parent homes. Research suggests that teachers' perceptions toward the single parent child is very important. This research was an attempt to see if teachers perceive children from single parent homes in a more negative way than children from intact homes.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Divorce: How Adults Have Been Affected

Divorce is not a new issue. Its effects have been felt keenly by adults and children. The structure of the American family composed of mother, father, boy, and girl, has changed. This change in the structure of the American family has affected society economically, politically, socially, and also educationally. The divorce rate has increased in the United States from less than 1 divorce per 1,000 people to more than 5 divorces per 1,000 people in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1981).

In 1948 only 42% of divorcing couples had children under 18 years of age (Hunt, 1966). Currently, approximately 60% of divorcing people have children, many of whom are under the age of 5 when the divorce occurs (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). It has been estimated that there are currently 12 million children under the age of 18 whose parents have been divorced. If the divorce rate somewhat stabilizes, it is expected that approximately one million children a year will fall into this category and suffer the shock of the break-up of their families.

To understand how the child has been affected, it is necessary to understand how the parents have been

affected by divorce. When the marriage has failed, another lifestyle has emerged. The child has really lost two parents, the one who has left home and the one who remained at home, because this parent has changed also.

According to Flosi (1980), the divorcing process begins when one person has decided not to devote the time and emotions necessary to continue the growth of the commitment to the marriage. This phase was referred to as the "erosion of the affection," a time when one partner wanted out of the relationship and began to develop strategies toward that end.

The next phase was called "loss of attachment" and one partner started to provoke the other and the other partner tried to adjust. Finally, one partner said, "I want out." At this point, the marriage was publicly broken. This was considered one of two peak stress phases and this phase could continue for 10 to 15 years or longer, but the average time was two years.

The next phase, the "change identity," really took place in three areas. First, the "litigation period" which was begun with the first real call to the lawyer and ended with the divorce decree. Second, was the "transition period" in which the person adjusted from being married to being single; third, came the most stressful time of all, the "recovery period." This

stress was unmatched by any other life experience, even death. During this time, the adult who usually coped adequately in the past and who would cope adequately in the future started using a variety of behaviors to act out his fears, one example of which was the fear of having a nervous breakdown.

The final stage in the divorce process was called the "reorganization" phase. The divorced person had succeeded in adjusting to the divorce. He/She had an income, some social life, self-satisfaction, future orientation, and an opportunity for personal growth.

The parent-child relationships have been altered as a result of divorce. Parenting was difficult as the family structure broke down and the parent was making interpersonal adjustments such as dealing with stress, loneliness, and lowered self-esteem (Skeen and McKenry, 1980). However, there were many unanswered questions concerning parenting capabilities and behaviors during divorce. We have been cautioned against expecting all children and parents to react the same way in divorce. Each individual's behavior depended upon each person's unique personality, experiences and the support available.

Leahey (1984) found that generally, the divorce process was a time of distress for both children and adults. Deciding to divorce, dealing with the loss of

the noncustodial parent, and adapting to a one-parent household were all stressful experiences. Nevertheless, her research indicated that most children and adults reported not having been adversely affected by the divorce. Divorce was considered a crisis experience rather than a chronic one. Many people used it as a "marker event" and adults were more likely than children to discuss its benefits. Although many such families coped well with the crisis, there remained a large number who did not.

Divorce: How Children are Affected

The word "divorce" is a commonplace term in the experiential vocabulary of many students. Freeman (1985) found in her review of research that the four most common characteristics of children in the immediate post-divorce situation are guilt, fear, anger and depression.

Guilt

Hetherington (1979) found it was not uncommon for children to assume guilt for being the cause of the divorce. Children viewed divorce as their punishment for wrongdoing and believed that if they had acted better or corrected inappropriate behavior, their

parents would have reconciled. Kalter and Plunkett (1984) found that children of divorced parents demonstrated higher internality in locus of control than children from intact families. Many excellent books for children and parents were available which offered explanations of divorce and emphasize that divorce is a grown-up problem.

Fear

A second characteristic of children who experienced divorce was fear. Children feared abandonment by the other parent or the loss of their parents. Many children became clingy and experienced anxiety. More generalized anxiety may be caused by less parental attention and children's concern over who will love and take care of them (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Feelings of abandonment may stem from the children's belief that they are not worthy of affection and not loved by parents.

Anger

A third characteristic of children experiencing divorce was the feeling of intense anger. As Walsh (1980) described:

Hostility may be directed at the parent who has left the fold, and the child goes through the

"How could you leave me like this?" syndrome or she may develop an enmity toward the parent who remains, thinking "If you had been nicer to mom, she wouldn't have left" (p. 203).

Children may become destructive in their behaviors, and display aggression toward their parents. Such negative behavior was more frequently directed toward the child's mother. Hammond (1979) found that elementary aged boys displayed significantly more acting out and distractibility in school behavior than girls. In many post-divorce homes, discipline may become erratic and parental expectations for children's behavior may become inconsistent. A consistent, stable classroom in which expectations are clear and routines are predictable may help the child feel secure.

Depression

Sadness and depression have been evidenced in loss of appetite, hopelessness, moodiness and self-criticism. The child may have experienced a lower self-esteem with feelings such as, "I can't do anything right" (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

There are additional behaviors that some children may have displayed in reaction to divorce, they may deny the divorce and lie to their friends about it. Other children may cling to the hope that parents will reconcile (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980), becoming

preoccupied with the reconciliation and inventing plans to engineer it. Other signs may be headaches, stomachaches, and "hypermaturation" which was evidenced in assuming adult mannerisms and become superefficient helpers. Leahey (1984) found that the impact of divorce and living in a single parent family has some implications for sexual identity. Boys who experienced father absence early in life were found to have significantly less masculine self-concepts on a bipolar construct (masculine/feminine) than did boys with fathers. However, when an expanded construct was used, ten-to-19-year-old children of single parents were classified as androgynous (both male and female in one) or undifferentiated (boys tended to be more androgynous and girls more undifferentiated). It was found also that custodial mothers and fathers demonstrated higher levels of androgyny. There was no significant relationship, however, between parent and child self-concept of sex role.

Hozman and Froiland (1977) suggested that the experience of losing a parent through divorce is similar to that of losing a parent through death. They adopted the Kubler-Ross model for dealing with loss. In this model, children go through five stages as they learn to accept the loss of a parent. Initially, children deny the reality of the divorce. Denial is

followed by anger and then bargaining in which children try to get their parents back together. When they realize that their efforts cannot persuade parents to live together again, they become depressed. The final stage is acceptance of the divorce situation.

During divorce, specific developmental needs of children have gone unmet because of parental preoccupation with their own needs and parental role conflicts. Kelly and Wallerstein (1976) reported that young school-age children responded to divorce with pervasive sadness, fear, feelings of deprivation, and some anger. Hetherington et al. (1976) characterized behaviors of children as more dependent, aggressive, whiny, demanding, unaffectionate, and disobedient than behaviors of children from two parent homes. Anthony (1984) concluded that the major reaction during divorce was grief associated with guilt, while the major reaction after divorce was shame coupled with strong resentment.

Some positive aspects of single parent children have been found. Hetherington et al. (1978) suggested that divorce is often the most positive solution to destructive family functioning. For example, some children of divorce exhibited more empathy for others, increased helping behavior, and greater independence than children from intact families. Doering (1980)

revealed in his study that some parents said that relationships with their children were enhanced after the divorce. His studies have also shown that the children are better off in a one parent situation than in an unhappy, intact family situation.

Divorce: How the Child is Affected in School

Researchers have not been unanimous regarding the effects of divorce on children. Hammond (1979), for example, found no significant difference in self-concept, math and reading achievement, immaturity or withdrawal between students from intact families and those whose parents had divorced. Other researchers reported that some children even realized positive benefits when the stress of parental hostility was eliminated by divorce. They (the children of divorce) also may have highly developed strengths in explaining feelings, evaluating and understanding relationships, skills in managing conflict and mastering disappointments, experience in assuming responsibility and character traits of independence and resilience (Garwin, 1984). With the possibility of some positive effects being realized, the majority of research indicated that divorce has some detrimental effects upon most children who experienced it. In studying the

education of the single parent child, academic performance, emotional adjustments, self-concept and behavior were influenced.

Academic Achievement

In a survey looking at the educational needs of single parent children and two parent children, children of single parents showed lower achievement in school. Thirty-eight percent of the single parent children were classified as low achievers as compared to 23% of children from two parent families. The NAESP Staff Report (1980), revealed that children from one parent families moved in and out of the school district more often. They showed being tardy at least once compared to two parent children. They were also twice as likely to skip school and were more frequently referred to the school office for disciplinary reasons, 16% were from one parent families compared to 10% from two parent families. Academically it seemed that girls from single parent homes adjusted better than boys. The report also revealed that one parent children were classified as low achievers when compared to two parent children. Strom (1980) suggested that much of research is contradictory, but most showed lower achievement and negative effects on social behaviors where divorce is involved. Academic achievement might

be impaired by other variables, such as sex of the child, or family income (Guidubaldi, 1983). It was also suggested that schools should be careful not to interpret all problems as being a result of divorce, but to look at other factors, such as a learning disability (Black, 1979).

Emotional Adjustment

Emotional behaviors were evident in children who had recently experience divorce. Some emotions were guilt, aggression, acting-out, mourning, and often a deterioration in the parent-child relationship. The children's emotional adjustment was seen to be determined by the nature and quality of the new family environment. Hammond (1979), noted that teachers rated behavioral problems of boys much higher in a divorce setting. Such things as "acting out" and distractibility were more noticeable. Additionally, boys from single parent homes rated lower in math and they said their families were less happy. Hammond noted that boys may be reacting more than girls in a divorce because 79% of these children lived with the mother, indicating that boys at this age exhibited more symptoms related to the loss of a father than girls. Schoettle and Cantwell (1980) found that physically aggressive behavior was significantly more common for

all children of divorce. Palker (1980) found that some signs of emotional stress in children of divorce can be misbehavior, social withdrawal and crying easily. Allers (1980) noticed that withdrawal is one of the many symptoms found in children undergoing the type of stress caused by their parents' divorce. Snyder (1980) found as a result of her studies that children from broken homes do, in fact, visit the school nurse more often than students from intact families.

Self-Concept

Changes in self-concept have been a major research concern. Raschke and Vernon (1979) used the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to study the effects of family conflict and family structure (i.e., intact, single parent, reconstituted) on children's self-concepts. Results of the study showed that there was not a significant difference in the self-concept scores of children from intact, single parent, reconstituted, or other family types. Self-concept scores were significantly lower for children who reported higher levels of family conflict. The authors stated that this research does not lend support to the cliché that "broken homes yield broken young lives." (p. 373).

Parish and Taylor (1979) studied students to see if

self-concepts differed when the father was present in the home as opposed to situations where the father was absent due to divorce. Results showed that students who had experienced father-loss through divorce and whose mother had not remarried had significantly lower self-concepts than those from non-divorced families. Children who had father-loss due to divorce but whose mothers had remarried, showed lower self-concept than children from intact families, but not as low as the group whose mothers had not remarried.

Rubin and Price (1979) agreed with Parish and Taylor and also found that the age of the child at the time of the divorce was a factor in determining the extent of lowering the self-concept. Allers (1982) found that single parent children may no longer derive enjoyment from activities and social interaction.

According to Parish (1981), children's self-concepts slowly evolve as a result of successive comparisons and contrasts between one's self and one's parents. On the Personal Attributes Inventory for children, he found that children recorded persistently high scores between themselves and their mothers no matter what their families configuration was, but scores between themselves and their father did diminish progressively following parental divorce and then after the remaining parent's remarriage.

Leahey (1984) found as a result of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale that boys and girls with single parents did not differ significantly from children of intact families on self-esteem. In fact, these children evidenced significantly higher levels of self-esteem than did children who perceived their families as rejecting.

Some of the research pinpointed more specific reasons for the lowered self-concepts that were found. Again, father absence was found to be a significant factor by Parish (1981). Suggested as a possible reason for lowered self-concept is the tendency of teachers to stereotype children of divorce, thus stigmatizing them. Santiock and Tracy (1978) documented this tendency in their study.

Another issue that should be considered is the mediational influence of the noncustodial parent on the child's self-esteem. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) reported that the father-son relationship increases in importance to the boys self-esteem as the child matures. At five years post divorce, a good father-child relationship appears linked to good self-esteem.

Behavior

The Student Rating Scale (SRS) test, which is a standardized, norm referenced evaluation of a child's

behavior in a variety of settings, was developed by Brown and Hammill (1978). This test was given to 483 student participants. Results of the study revealed several different findings. According to Delaney, Richards and Strathe (1984) children from single parent families perceived their own behavior as more negative and less appropriate than children from intact families in all three of the ecological areas--home, school and interpersonal relations. Although perceiving themselves more negatively when compared to intact families, children of divorce did view their own behavior in school as more appropriate than their behavior in the two other areas. Thus, the findings would suggest that the type of support, assistance and/or continuity provided in the classroom may be important to the child's positive perception of his/her own behavior in that setting. Younger children perceived their behavior more negatively than did older children in all three areas. The school may need to be particularly sensitive to the needs of these younger students from divorced/separated parents. Doering (1980) found that the children from divorced families exhibit more acting out behaviors in the classroom. Boys seemed to have more behavior problems than girls as seen by teachers and parents.

Teacher Expectations

Expectations tend to be self-sustaining. They affect both perception, by causing teachers to be alert for what they expect and less likely to notice what they do not expect, and interpretation, by causing teachers to interpret and perhaps distort what they see so that it is consistent with their expectations. Some expectations persist even though they do not coincide with the facts. Brophy and Good (1974) presented this model on how self-fulfilling prophecies affect classroom behavior:

1. The teacher expects specific behavior and achievement from particular students.
2. Because of these expectations, the teacher behaves differently toward different students.
3. This treatment by the teacher tells each student what behavior and achievement the teacher expects from him or her and affects the student's self-concept, achievement motivation, and level of aspiration.
4. If this teacher treatment is consistent over time, and if the student does not actively resist or change it in some way, it will shape his or her achievement and behavior. High-expectation students will be led to achieve at high levels, but the achievement of low-expectation students will decline.
5. With time, the student's achievement and behavior will conform more and more closely to that originally expected from him or her (p.521).

Johnson (1970), has suggested that students who are dependent, adult-oriented, and generally other-directed would be especially vulnerable to expectation effects.

With this research in mind, it seemed relevant to

see if teachers' perceive children from single parent homes in a more negative way than children from intact homes.

Divorce: How Schools and Teachers Can Affect
Children of Single Parents

More than three decades ago, W. I. Thomas (1931) wrote, "If men define. . .situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 177). This theory has come to be known in the social sciences as the self-fulfilling prophecy. It is based on two assumptions. First, that the act of making a definition about a situation is also an act of making a prophecy about it. Second, that the act of making a prophecy about a situation is also an act of creating the conditions through which the prophecy is realized (Palardy, 1969).

In his Doctoral Thesis, Palardy found when first-grade teachers reported that they believed that boys are far less successful than girls in learning to read, the boy pupils of those teachers did achieve less well on a standardized reading test than a comparable group of boy pupils whose teachers reported that they believed that boys are as successful as girls in learning to read.

The research found that children of single parent families showed many stresses and problems due to their

parents' divorce. However, these problems were not manifested in all children, and researchers have not been unanimous regarding the effects of divorce upon children.

Because divorce was found to be a crisis involving disruption of the family structure, the role of the school and the teacher were of particular importance. Delaney, et al. (1984) tested teachers with the Teacher Rating Scale (TRS) which assessed school student's behavior from the teachers perception. Highly significant differences were found: Children of intact families were perceived by their teachers as showing more positive and appropriate school and classroom behaviors than children of families of divorce/separation. The teachers did perceive the children of families of divorce/separation higher than these children perceived themselves. The communication of the teacher's more positive perception may be of particular importance to the single parent children experiencing changes in their lives as a result of divorce/separation. Message based on the elementary classroom teacher's perception affect the self-concept of children from intact and single parent homes, especially because the development of self-concept in elementary school children is incomplete and still open to change (Hamachek, 1972). Research by Fuller (1984)

suggested that teachers perceive children from single parent homes in a more negative manner than children from intact homes. Fuller (1986) developed a 25-item questionnaire to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of the behavior of students from intact and single parent homes. (Details of this survey are in Chapter III.)

If the school, a major institution in the life of parents and children, has been found conveying negative messages to children from single parent homes, then school counselors must be prepared to help these children evaluate and deal with these messages. It is not just children from single parent homes who need the support and understanding of school counselors; parents need it also. In a survey of 1,200 single parents from 47 states, 62% through school personnel did not perceive the single parent family as normal, and 45% thought the school staff assumed that any problems their children experienced were related to being from a single parent (Clay, 1981).

The research on children from intact and single parent homes suggested that teachers perceive the latter in the negative manner. Levine, referring to Birdwhistell (1982), examined how the preoccupation

with the ideal (traditional) family affects the way families are labeled and described.

A growing number of family researchers take the position that Americans, both lay and professional, hold to an idealized model of (the) family as breadwinning husband, homemaking wife and their two children.... The use of the traditional model as the ideal causes serious complications for the study of families by distorting the perspective of the investigators, leading the labeling of other family forms as deviant, broken, or unstable (p. 94).

It appeared that while teachers have a strong sense of the nature of parents of intact homes, they are less certain of the characteristics of single parents. Knowledge about familial stereotypes prevalent in schools and the broader community, as well as television, popular literature, movies, press, and school curriculum, can eventually help remove the artificial barriers resulting from such stereotyping.

Leahey (1984) found that educators can intervene in several ways not only to help families that have experienced divorce but also to influence social attitudes. Within the classroom, teachers must avoid stereotyping. It is possible to be sensitive to the situation of children of divorce without routinely suspecting that they have learning or social adjustment difficulties. Educators were also found to be in a position to initiate discussion and to model acceptance of various family lifestyles.

Teachers involuntarily become involved in the divorce trauma as they worked with these children of divorce and dealt with the impact that marital separation had upon the academic and social performance of their students. Hammond (1979) suggested that teachers can provide extra time and attention, and opportunities to talk about feelings if the children wish. This personal attention from teachers is crucial in schools where counselors are not available.

Elementary school teachers can do much to model acceptance of various familial life styles. Teachers can initiate classroom discussions about families and can include in the discussions families that have only one parent and families that have a remarriage.

It was suggested that teachers could become more aware of their choice of words, examples, and attitudes when talking about families with their students. Teachers could be provided with workshops or periodic training relative to the effects of marital separation upon children and strategies for dealing with the effects as seen in the classroom. Teachers could duplicate report cards, school calendars, etc. so the noncustodial parent could have a copy as well.

The teacher or principal could also encourage support groups for children of single parent homes. There was found to be a real need for caring adults to be present for these children to help them work through

their grief and provide a place for them to meet new friends who have shared similar experiences. Most of all, the teachers should be reminded to appraise their own attitudes to check the tendency to stereotype children from one parent families and the tendency to expect lowered achievement.

CHAPTER III

Purpose

The purpose of this paper was to survey elementary teachers in public and private schools, regarding the way single parent children were viewed to see if they were perceived in a more negative way than children from two parent families. If the perception of the teacher toward the single parent child is negative, it may hinder the single parent child's ability to achieve and build a positive self-concept. Teachers' perceptions of the student result in expectations that Brophy (1977) called self-fulfilling prophecies; that is, "individuals [children] tend to perceive and attempt to conform to the expectations that significant others [e.g., teachers] hold for them" (p. 580). In view of the research reported in Chapter II, it seemed important to do more research. A survey developed by Mary Lou Fuller was revised and used. (A full explanation is in the next section.) The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There would be no difference between the private and the public school teachers' perceptions of children from single parent homes and intact homes.
2. There would be no difference between the teacher with 10 years or less experience and the teacher with 11 years or more experience in perceiving

the single parent child and the child from an intact home.

3. There would be no difference between the teacher with single parent experiences and the teacher with no single parent experiences in perceiving single parent child and the child from an intact home.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by Mary Lou Fuller, a professor from the Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota. The instrument was revised and used with her permission. (A copy of the revised questionnaire and the letter of permission can be found in the Appendix.) Fuller's survey consisted of 25 questions which included 19 positive and six negative behaviors. In the revised questionnaire for this study, two questions were combined, which seemed similar and the wording on six questions was changed to negative behaviors. This questionnaire then contained 12 positive and 12 negative behaviors, a total of 24 questions. This was done for the purpose of tabulating responses more easily. In Fuller's survey the respondents were asked to mark a large X on the response that most nearly reflected their opinion. In this

revised survey, the respondents were asked to circle what reflected their opinion. The choices were 1) Children from Intact Homes, 2) Probably Children from Intact Homes, 3) No Difference, 4) Probably Children from Single Parent Homes, 5) Children from Single Parent Homes, 6) "I have no idea." This format was changed to shorten the number of pages on the questionnaire.

Items which reflect positive behaviors are numbers 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 22, 23 (i.e., good grades, responsible behavior, gets along well with peers). The items which reflect negative behaviors are numbers 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24 (i.e., tardy, shy/withdrawn, overt acting out behaviors).

The survey devised by Mary Lou Fuller was selected based on the review of literature found in Chapter II. The following paragraphs have shown how the survey questions relate to the literature review.

Schoettle and Cantwell (1980) found that physically aggressive behavior was significantly more common for all children of divorce. Palker (1980) found that some signs of emotional stress in children of divorce can be misbehavior, social withdrawal and crying easily. Allers (1980) noticed that withdrawal is one of the many symptoms found in children undergoing the type of

stress caused by their parents' divorce. Doering (1980) found that children from divorced families exhibit more acting out behaviors in the classroom. Boys seemed to have more behavior problems than girls as seen by teachers and parents.

Statements 1, 2, and 16 concerned aggressive behavior, misbehavior and social withdrawal as seen in the single parent child.

1. Which group of children is most apt to be acting out behavior problems? (i.e., excessive noise, fighting, etc.)

2. Which group of children tends to have trouble getting along with other children?

16. Which group of children is generally most apt to be shy and/or withdrawn?

In a study of children's perceptions on the consequences of divorce, Kalter and Plunkett (1984) found that more than half of their teachers believed divorce caused behavior/emotional problems. Hetherington, et. al. (1976) characterized behaviors and single parent children as more dependent, aggressive, whiny, demanding, unaffectionate, and disobedient than behaviors of children from two parent homes. Garwin (1984) found that single parent children may have highly developed strengths in explaining feelings, evaluating and understanding relationships, skills in managing conflicts

and mastering disappointments, experience in assuming responsibility and character traits of independence and resilience.

Statements 3, 9 and 10 addressed the aggressive, demanding, unaffectionate characteristics of the single parent child.

3. Which group of children generally displays the most responsible behavior?

9. Which group of children plays best with other children?

10. Which group of children is more inconsiderate of others?

Statements 11-19 addressed the characteristics of independence and responsibility.

11. Which group of children responds best to adult authority?

12. Which group of children displays the greatest independence?

13. Which group of children generally gets along best with adults?

19. Which group of children generally behaves in an immature manner?

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found as a result of their study that single parent children may experience insecurity and lowered self-esteem with feelings such as, "I can't do anything right". Allers (1980) found

that single parent children may no longer derive enjoyment from activities and social interaction. Leahey (1984) found as a result of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale that boys and girls with single parents did not differ significantly from children of intact families on self-esteem. In fact, these children evidenced significantly higher levels of self-esteem than did children who perceived their families as rejecting.

Statements five and six were chosen to reflect lowered self-concepts of single parent children.

5. Which group of children is most apt to participate in extracurricular activities? (i.e. band, chorus, sports, clubs, etc.)

6. Which group of children do you judge to be more unhappy?

In a study of children's perceptions on the consequences of divorce, Kalter and Plunkett (1984) found that more than half of their teachers believed divorce caused behavior/emotional problems. The NAESP Report (1980) revealed the following: (1) One parent children showed lower achievement in school. (2) Children from one parent families moved in and out of a school district at twice the rate of children from two parent families. (3) 31% of the elementary school children

from one parent families were tardy at least once compared with 25% of those from two parent families. (4) One parent children were found to be twice as likely to skip school and twice as likely to drop out of school as their counterparts from two parent households. (5) Of those elementary students who were referred to the school office for disciplinary reasons, 16% were from one parent homes compared to 10% from two parent homes. According to Delaney, Richards and Strathe (1984) children from single parent families perceived their own behavior as more negative and less appropriate than children from intact families in all three of the ecological areas - home, school and interpersonal relations. Although perceiving themselves more negatively when compared to intact families, children of divorce did view their own behavior in school as more appropriate than their behavior in the other two areas. Thus, the findings would suggest that the type of support, assistance and/or continuity provided in the classroom may be important to the child's positive perception of his/her own behavior in that setting. Hammond (1980) found that boys from divorced families were rated lower in Math. achievement, although not to a significant level, than boys from intact families. The NAESP Staff Report (1980) revealed that one parent

children were classified as low achievers when compared to two parent children. Strom (1980) suggested that much of research is contradictory, but most showed lower achievement and negative effects on social behaviors where divorce is involved. Academic achievement might be impaired by other variables, such as sex of the child, or family rank (Guidubaldi, 1983). It was also suggested that schools should be careful not to interpret all problems as being a result of divorce, but to look at other factors, such as a learning disability (Black, 1979).

Statements 7, 8, 14, 15, 21-24 addressed school behaviors and achievement of the single parent child.

7. Which group of children is most apt to require services of the school counselor/psychologist?

8. Which group of children is the most cooperative within the classroom setting?

14. Which group of children is generally most apt to make poor grades?

15. Which group of children requires the most special services (E.M.H., E.H., L.D., Speech, etc.), not including counseling?

21. Which group of children is the most likely to be late to school?
22. Which group of children appears to be the most organized?
23. Which group of children is most apt to complete homework assignments and projects which are to be completed outside the school?
24. Which group has the poorer attendance record?

Snyder (1980) found as a result of her studies that children from broken homes do, in fact, visit the school nurse more often than students from intact families.

Statements 4, 17 and 18 checked the physical characteristics that might be seen in single parent children.

4. Which group of children is most apt to be neat and well groomed?
17. Which group of children has better general physical health?
18. Which group of children is most apt to visit the school nurse?

Leahey (1984) found that the impact of divorce and living in a single parent family has some implications for sexual identity. Boys who experienced father

absence early in life were found to have significantly less masculine self-concepts on a bipolar construct (masculine-feminine) than did boys with fathers. However, when an expanded construct was used, ten-to-19-year-old children of single parents were classified as androgynous (both male and female in one) or undifferentiated (boys tended to be more androgynous and girls more undifferentiated). It was also found that custodial mothers and fathers demonstrated higher levels of androgyny. There was no significant relationship, however, between parent and child self-concept of sex role.

Statement 20 was used to observe sex role concepts of single parent children.

20. Which group of girls/boys displays the most feminine/masculine traits?

Directions for Completing the Survey

A cover letter was stapled to the top of each survey. The respondents were told that this survey was being done as part of the requirements in the Masters in Education Program. They were told the purpose of this survey, and that participation was voluntary and confidential. They were asked to respond based on their observations, and asked to return the survey to

their respective school office either completed or unmarked by March 18, 1988 (private schools) or March 28, 1988 (public schools). They were also advised that results of the study would be sent to each participating school. (A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix C).

The second page consisted of demographic information for the teacher. This included: (a) years of teaching experience, (b) type of school in which they were currently teaching, (c) estimated percentage of children of class membership living in a single parent home, (d) whether they are now, or have ever been a single parent, (e) if as a child, they ever spent any time as a member of a single parent home.

Finally, two definitions, Single Parent Home and Intact Home, were given.

Pages three and four consisted of the survey.

The surveys were delivered to each school personally and were given to the secretary or placed in the teachers' mailboxes. The questionnaires were to be returned to the office and were picked up personally on the given date.

Population

Three private schools in St. Charles County, MO. participated in the survey. Forty-five questionnaires

were given to private school elementary K-6 classroom and special teachers.

One public school in St. Charles County, MO. also participated. Seventy-two questionnaires were given to elementary K-6 classroom and special teachers. Three of the four schools were located in the same attendance area (2 private and 1 public). The third private school drew students from a similar socio-economic population.

In Mary Lou Fuller's survey teachers from four of five schools in a southwestern urban school district were eligible to participate in the study. The district was in a lower middle and middle class neighborhood containing a large population of children from both single parent and intact parent homes. Fuller's study demonstrated that elementary school teachers from the district perceived the school behaviors of children from intact homes more positively than children from single parent homes. Conversely, children from single parent homes were viewed as exhibiting more negative school behaviors than children from intact homes.

Finally, the age of the teachers seemed to influence their perceptions. Teachers 36 and over were more extreme than their younger colleagues in attributing negative behaviors to children from single

parent families, whereas teachers 35 and younger were more likely to attribute positive behaviors to these same children. Teachers' experiences as single parents were non-significant.

This survey was used in St. Charles County, Missouri (the midwest), an area in which shopping areas, churches and activities are not easily accessible by walking. The schools used were from lower-middle to upper middle-class economic neighborhoods. The schools used in this survey have adopted self help groups for single parent children in their schools; this was not mentioned in Fuller's study. Comparisons used in this survey were 1) public school teachers and parochial school teachers, 2) teachers of both groups with 10 or less years experience and 11 or more years experience and 3) teachers of both groups with personal single parent experiences. The first two comparisons were not used in Fuller's survey and the third comparison may differ due to the different population area.

Since the population in this survey was different and different comparisons were made, this research seemed valid.

Summary

Mary Lou Fuller's survey was used with some minor changes because the research in Chapter II followed so closely the concerns suggested in her survey. Her permission was granted. This questionnaire was given to elementary teachers in four St. Charles County, MO. schools. Responses were voluntary and confidential. The reason for this survey was to see if the teachers perceive the single parent child in a more negative way than the child from an intact home.

Three comparisons were made in this study:

1. Elementary teachers in public and private schools.
2. Teachers with 11 years or more experience and teachers with 10 years or less experience.
3. Teachers with single parent experience as an adult or a child and teachers with no single parent experience.

Percentages were computed of the total average for the 12 positive and 12 negative responses for each group. A t-test was also computed for each individual's response for each group.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Participants

There were 45 elementary teachers in the three private schools and 72 elementary teachers in the one public school surveyed in this study. The response rate was 53% (54 of the 117 participants responded). There were 28 responses from the public school teachers and 26 responses from the private school teachers. The range in experience was from 1-40 years with 24 teachers having 10 years or less experience and 30 teachers having 11 or more years experience. There were 45 teachers who had no single parent experience and 9 teachers who had single parent experience.

Scoring and Analysis

The survey consisted of 24 items which were described student behaviors. The statements described 12 positive and 12 negative behaviors. The teachers responded by indicating whether the behavior was most likely to be attributed to a child from an intact family, a single parent family or if no difference was seen. Answers one and two attributed behaviors to children from intact homes, answer three attributed "no difference", answers four and five attributed behaviors to children of single parents.

Each response was tallied and percentages were computed for six groupings. There were three tallies of the responses--public school teachers versus private school teachers; teachers with 10 years experience or less versus those with 11 years or more experience; teachers with no single parent experience versus those with single parent experience. These percentages are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentages For ALL Groups

	Positive				Negative			
	In-Tact	No Diff.	Single Parent	Ttl.	In-Tact	No Diff.	Single Parent	Ttl.
Public	51%	41%	8%	100%	4%	46%	50%	100%
Private	40%	52%	8%	100%	6%	53%	41%	100%
10 Years Or Less	39%	52%	9%	100%	3%	55%	42%	100%
11 Years Or More	49%	44%	7%	100%	5%	46%	49%	100%
No Single Parent Exper.	47%	45%	8%	100%	5%	47%	48%	100%
Single Parent Exper.	44%	45%	11%	100%	3%	66%	31%	100%

Table 1 shows all groups and the total percentages for each group. The percentages for each group varied by only a small amount. Concerning the positive behaviors, the "no differences" responses showed very close to 50% for each group of behaviors, ranging from 41%-66%. The perceptions of teachers attributing positive behaviors to children of intact families was also close with responses ranging from 39%-51%. Total positive behaviors attributed to children from single parent families ranged from 7%-11%. As for the negative behavior of single parent children, the percentage range was also very close for all groups. The "no difference" group ranged from 46%-66%. The perceptions of teachers attributing negative behaviors to children from intact homes ranged from 3%-6% and the percentage range for teachers attributing negative behaviors to children from single parent homes was 31%-50%.

Comparison of Public and Private School Teachers

The first hypothesis for this study was that there would be no difference between the private and public school teachers' perceptions of children from single parent homes and intact homes. The percentages for the 12 positive responses were computed. Then, the percentages for the 12 negative responses were

computed. The percentage results are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

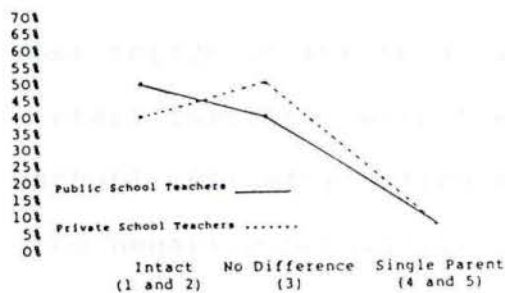


Figure 1: Positive Behaviors by Family Types

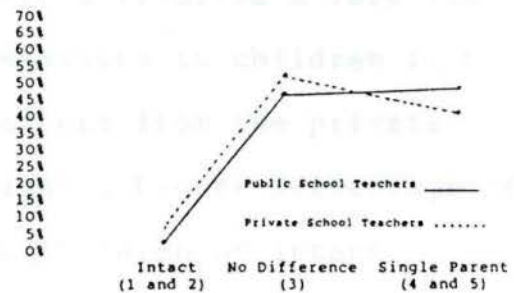


Figure 2: Negative Behaviors by Family Types

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the teachers from both the public (51%) and private (40%) schools seemed to attribute more positive behaviors to the children from intact families. The teachers from the public school seemed to attribute a higher percentage of positive behaviors to children from intact homes than teachers from the private schools. Teachers from the private (52%) schools attributed a higher percentage to "no difference" than the public (41%) school teachers. Both groups attributed 8% of the positive behaviors to children of single parents.

As shown in Figure 2, both groups of teachers attributed more negative behaviors to children of single parents, with the public school teachers (50%) attributing a higher percentage of negative behaviors to children of single parents than private school teachers (41%). The teachers in the private schools

(53%) attributed a higher percentage to the "no difference" items than the public school teachers (46%). Both groups of teachers attributed a very low percentage of the negative behaviors to children from intact families, with the teachers from the private school (6%) attributing a slightly higher percentage of the negative behaviors to the children of intact families. According to these percentages it seemed that public school teachers were more extreme in attributing more positive behaviors to children from intact families and more negative behaviors to children from single parent families.

To test the hypothesis, a mean response was computed for each individual completing the survey. This was done by adding the number value of each individual's responses to the 12 positive items and dividing by 12. Then the number value of each individual's responses to the 12 negative questions were added and divided by 12. A mean score of 3.0 would indicate "no difference" was perceived by the teacher attributing behaviors to intact or single parent children. The score of 1.0-2.9 meant more behaviors were attributed to the children from intact homes and 3.1-5.0 meant more behaviors were attributed to children from single parent homes. A t-test was computed for each of the

groupings to see if there was a statistically significant difference with $p \leq .10$ being significant (equal to or less than .10).

Table 2 shows the results of the t -test for elementary teachers from public and private schools in their responses to the 12 positive behavior items on the survey.

Table 2

t -Test of Mean Responses On Positive
Items Given By Public And Private
School Teachers

Positive Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t	p
Public	26	2.29	.60	52	-1.63	.05
Private	28	2.55	.56			

The results showed a statistically significant difference. The teachers from the public schools seemed to attribute more positive behaviors to children from intact families, although both groups attributed positive behaviors to children from intact families.



Table 3 shows the results of the t-test for the negative behaviors.

Table 3

t-Test of Mean Responses On
Negative Items Given By Public
And Private School Teachers

Negative Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	<u>t</u>	p
Public	26	3.71	.48	52	2.51	.007
Private	28	3.43	.33			

Table 3 showed that both groups of teachers attributed negative behaviors to the children of single parents, but teachers from the public school seemed to perceive the single parent child more negatively than teachers from the private schools. The results showed a statistically significant difference.

Comparison of Teachers By Experience

The second hypothesis stated that there would be no difference between the teachers with 10 years or less experience and the teachers with 11 years or more

experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home. The percentages were computed for the 12 positive behavior items, and the 12 negative behavior items.

These percentages are reported in Figures 3 and 4.

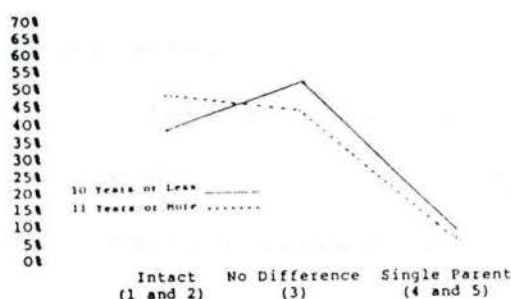


Figure 3: Positive Behaviors by Family Types

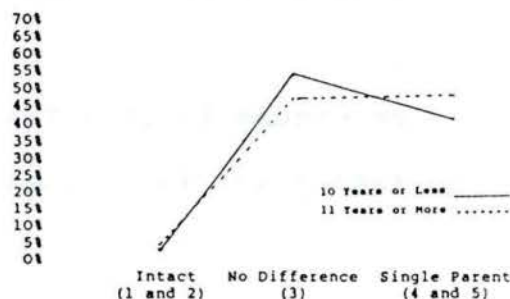


Figure 4: Negative Behaviors by Family Types

As shown in Figures 3 and 4, both groups of teachers attributed more positive behaviors to children of intact families. The teachers with 10 years or less experience seemed to attribute a lower percentage of the positive behaviors to the children of intact families than did the teachers with 11 years or more experience. In the "no difference" category, the teachers with 10 years or less experience gave a higher percentage of positive responses.

As shown in Figure 4, both groups of teachers attributed negative behaviors to children from single parent families. The teachers with 11 years or more experience attributed a lower percentage of negative behaviors to "no difference", and a higher percentage

of negative behavior to children from single parent families. It appears that teachers with 11 years or more experience were more extreme in attributing positive behaviors to children from intact families and negative behaviors to children from single parent families than those teachers with 10 years or less experience.

To test this hypothesis, a t-test of means was computed. Table 4 shows the results of the t-test on the positive responses.

Table 4

t-Test of Mean Responses On Positive
Behavior Items By Teachers With
10 Years Or Less Experience And Teachers
With 11 Years Or More Experience

Positive Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	<u>t</u>	p
10 Years Or Less	24	2.54	.53	52	1.33	.09
11 Years Or More	30	2.33	.62			

As shown in Table 4, the teachers from both groups attributed more positive behaviors to children from intact families. The teachers with 11 years or more experience seemed to regard the positive behaviors as more typical of children from intact families than did teachers with 10 years or less experience. The t-test results show a statistically significant difference.

Table 5 shows the results of the t-test for negative responses.

Table 5

t-Test of Mean Responses On
Negative Items By Teachers With
10 Years Or Less Experience And
Teachers With 11 Years Or More Experience

Negative Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	<u>t</u>	p
10 Years Or Less	24	3.56	.43	52	-.07	.47
11 Years Or More	30	3.57	.44			

In Table 5, the teachers from both groups attributed more negative behaviors to the children from single parent families. The mean for the teachers with 11 years or more experience attributed slightly more negative behaviors to children from single parent families. The t-test results showed no statistically significant difference.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be no difference between teachers with 10 years or less experience and teachers with 11 years or more experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home. This hypothesis was not confirmed by the teachers attributing positive behaviors to the 12 positive responses, but it was supported by the teachers attributing negative behaviors to the 12 negative responses.

Comparison of Teachers With Single Parent Experience and Teachers With No Single Parent Experience.

The third hypothesis for this study was that there would be no difference between the teacher with single parent experience and the teacher with no single parent experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home. The percentages for the 12 positive responses were computed. Then, the percentages for the 12 negative responses were

computed. The percentage results are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

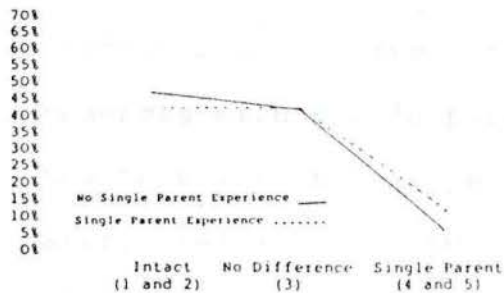


Figure 5: Positive Behaviors by Family Types

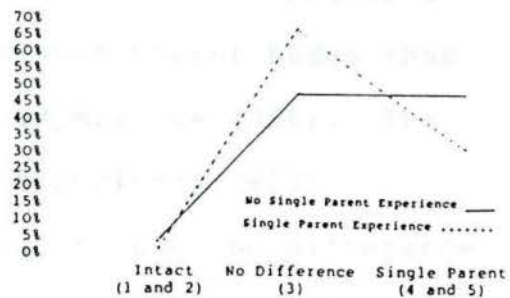


Figure 6: Negative Behaviors by Family Types

As shown in Figures 5 and 6, the teachers from both groups, no single parent experience (47%) and single parent experience (31%), seemed to attribute more positive behaviors to the children from intact families. The teachers with no single parent experience seemed to attribute a higher percentage of positive behaviors to children from intact families than teachers with single parent experience. Teachers with no single parent experience (45%) attributed a lower percentage to "no difference" than the teachers with single parent experience (58%). The teachers with no single parent experience attributed a lower percentage (8%) of the positive behaviors to children from single parent homes than the teachers with single parent experience.

As shown in Figure 6, both groups of teachers

attributed more negative behaviors to children from single parent homes. The teachers with no single parent experience (45%) seemed to attribute more negative behaviors to children from single parent homes than teachers with single parent experience (31%). The teachers with single parent experience (61%) attributed a higher percentage to the "no difference" items than the teachers with no single parent experience (47%). Both groups of teachers attributed a very low percentage of the negative behaviors to children of intact families, with the teachers with single parent experience (3%) attributing a slightly lower percentage than the teachers with no single parent experience. According to these percentages it seemed that teachers with no single parent experience were more extreme in attributing more positive behaviors to children of intact families and more negative behaviors to children from single parent families.

To test this hypothesis a t-test of means was computed. Table 6 shows the results of the t-test for teachers with no single parent experience and single parent experience in their responses to the 12 positive behavior items on the survey.

Table 6

t-Test of Mean Responses On Positive
Items By Teachers With Single Parent
Experience And Teachers With No
Single Parent Experience

Positive Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	<u>t</u>	p
Single Parent Exper.	9	2.51	.58	52	-.47	.32
No Single Parent Exper.	45	2.41	.59			

The results showed no statistically significant difference. The teachers with no single parent experience seemed to attribute more positive behaviors to children of intact families than teachers with single parent experience, although both groups attributed positive behaviors to children from intact families.

Table 7 shows the results of the t-test for the negative behaviors.

Table 7

t-Test of Mean Responses On Negative Behavior Items By Teachers With Single Parent Experience And No Single Parent Experience

Negative Responses	N	Mean	S.D.	df	<u>t</u>	p
Single Parent Exper.	9	3.42	.46	52	-1.08	.14
No Single Parent Exper.	45	3.59	.42			

Table 7 showed that both groups of teachers attributed negative behaviors to the children of single parents, but teachers with no single parent experience seemed to perceive the children of single parents more negatively than teachers with single parent experience. The results of the t-test computed no statistically significant difference between teachers with single parent experience and teachers with no single parent experience.

This group of teachers confirmed the third hypothesis which was, there would be no difference

between the teacher with no single parent experience in perceiving the children from the intact home and the single parent home. The null hypothesis being accepted.

Summary

The results of the total percentages showed that teachers from each group were consistent in attributing positive behavior responses to children from intact homes and negative behavior responses to children from single parent homes.

The results of the t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the teachers in the public and private school, which resulted in the first hypothesis being unconfirmed.

The results of the t-test showed a statistically significant difference between those teachers with 10 years or less experience and those with 11 years or more experience when answering the 12 positive behavior responses. No statistically significant difference was found between these groups in answering the 12 negative behavior responses.

The results of the t-test for the third grouping between teachers with single parent experience and those without such experience resulted in a null hypothesis for both the positive and negative behavior responses attributed to children from an intact family and

children from a single parent family.

The second hypothesis, H2, states that children of single parents will have lower IQ scores than children of two-parent families. This hypothesis is based on the idea that single parents may have less time and resources to devote to their children's education and cognitive development. However, research has shown that children of single parents often receive more attention and resources from their single parent, which can lead to similar or even higher IQ scores compared to children of two-parent families. Therefore, H2 is rejected.

The third hypothesis, H3, states that children of single parents will have higher IQ scores than children of two-parent families. This hypothesis is based on the idea that single parents may be more involved in their children's lives and provide more educational resources. However, research has shown that children of single parents often have lower IQ scores than children of two-parent families, likely due to factors such as economic hardship and less parental involvement. Therefore, H3 is rejected.

The fourth hypothesis, H4, states that there will be no difference between children of single parents and children of two-parent families in terms of IQ scores. This hypothesis is based on the idea that the effects of single parenthood on children's cognitive development are minimal. However, research has shown that children of single parents often have lower IQ scores than children of two-parent families, indicating that H4 is rejected.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

The review of Literature in Chapter II revealed mixed results in studies concerning single parent children. The effect of divorce is a crisis event rather than a chronic one. Not all children react to divorce in the same way. Research revealed that some children reacted positively once the pressures of living in a disruptive home were removed. Some of the research dealt with the perception of the teacher concerning the behavior of the single parent child.

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There would be no difference between the private and the public school teachers' perceptions of children from single parent homes and intact homes.
2. There would be no difference between the teacher with 10 years or less experience and the teacher with 11 years or more experience in perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home.
3. There would be no difference between the teacher with single parent experience and the teacher with no single parent experience in

perceiving the single parent child and the child from an intact home.

The teachers from both the public and private schools attributed more positive behaviors to children from intact families and more negative behaviors to children from single parent families. The public school teachers seemed more extreme in attributing positive behaviors to children from intact families and more negative behaviors to children from single parent families. On the survey, teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of single parent children in their classrooms. The response from teachers in the public school was estimated at 13%, while the response from teachers in the private school was estimated at 6%. The higher percentage of single parent students in the public school classrooms may be a reason for the difference in perception of teachers from the public and private schools. These results may also indicate that children from intact homes do respond better to the school atmosphere than children from single parent homes.

According to the research done by Mary Lou Fuller (1984), the children from single parent homes may be receiving negative messages that help diminish their self-concepts. The identification and awareness of teacher perceptions may aid in planning for classroom

environments that are more conducive to developing positive self-concepts of children from intact and single parent homes.

Another result from this study seemed to reveal that teachers with 11 years or more experience seemed to attribute more positive behaviors to children from intact homes and more negative behaviors to children of single parent homes than teachers with 10 years or less experience. This may be due to the assumption that teachers with 11 years or more experience may be older teachers and base their behavioral expectations on the nature and needs of the intact family. Until recently, only a small percentage of students have been from single parent homes; teachers with 11 years or more experience may not have had much involvement with single parent children. Teachers with 10 years or less years experience are probably younger teachers and may have more awareness of the single parent family due to experience of family members or friends. This could also be due to the perception of the teacher assuming that a certain group of children (in this case, children of single parents) will behave in a certain way.

Also, according to this study, the experience of the teacher (single parent or no single parent) was non-significant. This grouping was also non-significant

in the research done by Mary Lou Fuller (1984). This finding seems to suggest that teachers' experiences as single parents do not change their expectations of positive and negative behaviors for students from single parent families and intact families.

According to the data from this study it seemed that all groups of teachers attributed more positive behaviors to children from intact homes and more negative behaviors to children from single parent homes. It is also important to note that in nearly all the percentage results, all teachers attributed a high percentage to "no difference" in the perception of the behaviors of the two family types. This seems to mean that many teachers attempt to see children as children instead of attributing certain behaviors to certain family types.

Recommendations for Further Study

In studying this topic further, it may be helpful to include a much larger population than was used for this study. Selection of participants by a random sample may also be recommended. Mary Lou Fuller (1984) included the age of the teacher in her study. This would possibly be more helpful than the years of experience in future research. It may also be helpful

to include High School teachers in the survey.

Nearly 50% of children now being born will live in single parent homes at some time before the age of 18. It seems fitting that teachers aware of the power of expectations be prepared to teach children from single parent homes as informed and caring individuals. It seems that teachers and school administrators aware of the problems which children of single parents may be experiencing need to take steps to help teachers and children of single parents deal with this situation. These suggestions may be helpful.

1. In-service training for teachers and administrators on the nature of contemporary family styles.

2. Classroom teachers can try to encourage reading of books, viewing of T.V. programs, etc. that are about single parent families.

3. Teachers and administrators can encourage self-help programs for children from single parent homes. (Each school used in this survey had a special program for children of single parents.)

4. Teachers and administrators should try to avoid assuming that all families consist of a Father and Mother in the home. This may prove helpful in assigning homework and sending papers home (duplicates could be made of progress reports, good papers, etc.,

so the single parent child will have a copy for each parent).

5. Teachers and administrators should be careful not to stereotype children from single parent homes as having negative behaviors because of their family type.

These suggestions may develop more awareness about the nature and needs of single parent families and while helping the single parent child they may also help the teachers.

1000 University Ave.
Laramie, Wyo. 82002
4/28/78

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO MARY LOU FULLER

Mary Lou Fuller
c/o The Learning and Research
Center for Health
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202

Dear Mrs. Fuller:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your survey on
the subject of working on my thesis. I am a student
at college. I would like to see your survey. I have
not had a chance to make a few changes. I have changed
the title. Its respondents are to include students and
the faculty with clubs, and representatives from
the business, health, and social services. I have
changed the questions to be 2, 4, 11, 14, 15 and 17
and have added questions 10 and 13. The total
number of questions is now 17. I have enclosed a copy of
the survey for your review.

I am sure you will find it interesting and
I would appreciate your comments on the survey.

Sincerely,

Michael...
Michael...

6 Circle Way
St. Charles, MO 63303
1 March 1988

Mary Lou Fuller
Center for Teaching and Learning
P. O. Box 8158
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202

Dear Ms. Fuller,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your survey. As you know, I am working on my Thesis from Lindenwood College. I would like to use your survey in my research but I have made a few changes. I have changed the format. The respondents are to circle a number from one to six with number one representing Intact Families, number two Probably Intact Families, etc. I have re-worded questions number 2, 6, 11, 18, 22 and 24 which were positive behaviors to negative behaviors, and combined questions number 10 and 15, making a total of 24 questions. I have enclosed a copy of these changes for your approval.

I appreciate the help you have already given me and anxiously await your reply. I will need your approval before I use this survey.

Sincerely,

Margaret Huebner

Margaret Huebner

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION FROM MARY LOU FULLER

Mary Lou Fuller
1000 N. 1st St.
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103
405-475-1234

I request you for our interest in this study and
to assist in your research. Please send me
any information you have on your study. I will
also be interested in any materials and data
you have on your study.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,
[Signature]
[Name]
[Address]
[Phone Number]

UNIVERSITY OF  NORTH DAKOTA

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
1002-18-10000-1000
1002-18-10000-1000

March 8, 1968

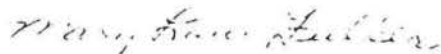
Margaret Huebner
6 Circle Way
St. Charles, MO 63303

Dear Ms. Huebner,

I applaud you for your interest in this timely subject and encourage you in your research. Please feel free to use my survey instrument and materials in your study. I find your revisions interesting and acceptable and look forward to receiving a copy of your findings.

Please feel free to call upon me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Mary Lou Fuller, Assoc. Prof.
Chair, Elementary Education

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO DEAR COLLEAGUE

Dear Colleague,

I am a student in the Masters in Education Program at Lindenwood College. As part of the requirements for this program, I am conducting a research project. I would very much appreciate your participation by filling out the attached survey.

It is common knowledge that the number of children in our schools who live in single parent homes has increased dramatically in recent years. Educators are expressing concern about the effect this change in family structure has upon children. A number of research studies have tried to identify these effects, both positive and negative. The purpose of my research is to gather additional information on this subject.

Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. The reporting of results will not identify respondents by name or by school.

Please respond to the questions based upon your observations of behaviors typical of children in a particular group, not on your observation of any one particular child. There are, of course, no "right or wrong" or "better or worse" responses.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to the office. The questionnaire needs to be returned by
FRIDAY MORNING, MARCH 18TH, 1988.

If you do not wish to participate, please return the questionnaire unmarked.

The results of the survey will be sent to each participating school when the study is completed.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely yours,

Margaret Huebner

Margaret Huebner

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
500 EAST LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

Background Information

Name of child and responsible parent

Type of home in which you are currently residing

Public _____
Private _____

Definition

Step-Parent Home—A home in which the child lives with one parent, a stepparent, or children of a stepparent.

APPENDIX D

[In the table listed in a step-parent home consider as "single-parent" if you exclude the stepparent in a single parent home, if the stepparent is not living with the child in a step-parent home, or if the child is experiencing difficulty adjusting to the stepparent.]

SURVEY

Single Home—A home in which the child lives with two parents (i.e., with natural parents or adoptive parents) or a stepparent and one or more children. If you do not know if the children are first stepchildren, consider "single parent" if you do not know if they are stepchildren.

What percentage of your total membership do you estimate lives in a single parent home?

Are you now, or have you ever been, a stepparent?
If so, did you spend any time as a member of a single parent home prior to one year ago?

Yes _____
No _____
Yes _____
No _____
Don't know _____

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

TEACHER PERCEPTION SURVEY
PLEASE DO NOT PLACE YOUR NAME
ON THIS SURVEY

74

Demographic Information

Years of teaching experience _____

Type of school in which you are currently teaching _____
Public _____
Private _____

Definitions

Single Parent Home--A home in which only one parent and child, or children reside.

(If the child lives in a step-parent home consider him as "single-parent" if you believe the time spent in a single parent home is still affecting behavior and/or if the child is experiencing difficulty adjusting to the step-parent.)

Intact Home--A home in which the child lives with two parents (ie., both natural parents or adoptive parents with adoption at an early age. If you do not know if the children are from stepparent homes [remarriage] or intact homes, consider them as members of intact homes).

What percentage of your class membership do you estimate lives in a single parent home? _____ %

Are you now, or have you ever been, a single parent? Yes _____
No _____

As a child did you spend any time as a member of a single parent home? (prior to age 12) Yes _____
No _____
*Unsure _____

*Comment _____

There is no "right or wrong" or "better or worse" response.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle the number of the response that most nearly reflects your opinion, based on your observations:

1. Children From Intact Homes
2. Probably Children From Intact Homes
3. No Different
4. Probably Children From Single Parent Homes
5. Children From Single Parent Homes
6. I Have No Idea

1. Which group of children is most apt to demonstrate "acting out" behavior problems? 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. Which group of children tends to have trouble getting along with other children? 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Which group of children generally displays the most responsible behavior? 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. Which group of children is most apt to be neat and well groomed? 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. Which group of children is most apt to participate in extra-curricular activities? (i.e. band, chorus, sports, clubs, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Which group of children do you judge to be more unhappy? 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Which group of children is most apt to require services of the school counselor/psychologist? 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. Which group of children is the most cooperative within the classroom setting? 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. Which group of children plays best with other children? 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Which group of children is more inconsiderate of others? 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. Which group of children responds best to adult authority? 1 2 3 4 5 6

12. Which group of children displays the greatest independence? 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. Which group of children generally gets along best with adults? 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. Which group of children is generally most apt to make poor grades? 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. Which group of children requires the most special services (E.M.H., E.H., L.D., Speech, etc.), not including counseling? 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. Which group of children is generally most apt to be shy and/or withdrawn? 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Which group of children has better general physical health? 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. Which group of children is most apt to visit the school nurse? 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. Which group of children generally behaves in an immature manner? 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. Which group of girls/boys displays the most feminine/masculine traits? 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. Which group of children is most likely to be late to school? 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. Which group of children appears to be the most organized? 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. Which group of children is most apt to complete homework assignments and projects which are to be completed outside the school setting? 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. Which group of children has a poorer attendance record? 1 2 3 4 5 6

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