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Analysis and Reflection

Kids have it rough. With outside factors such as standardized testing, poor nutritional intake and lack of social interaction with fellow students during the school day, you would think that it could not get worse; but it can. As a music educator, I feel it is necessary to understand all aspects, not just music related, on how children learn and what outside factors can prohibit the intake of information that will inevitably serve them for the rest of their lives. Divorce can have an immense effect on development process of children and adolescents. One aspect that I will be focusing on in this paper is how adolescents are affected by **divorce** and how delinquency is related to adolescents after divorce.

Synthesis

Separation or Divorce of a child's parents can be a traumatic, stressful and even devastating ordeal that can affect children for most of childhood, adolescence and on. The affect of Divorce can begin to hinder and eventually lead to poor academics, increasingly becoming more in trouble with authority figures if not handled with proper and delicate care. There have been several research articles and journals that have sought to find different components that have ultimately helped, and hurt, children during the transition from a complete family to having to go to Mom or Dad's house on certain

days and weeks depending on the specific situation. These research articles have brought us information that can essentially take away some devastating factor with Divorce.

Summary of Effects on Various Age Groups

It has been clearly established that outside factors deal with how well a child will take their parents divorce. The **age** of the child plays a factor in how strongly the divorce effects the child. If a child is younger he or she will be more dependant and attached to their parents and to their parents entity as a couple, however the separation and disagreement between their parents will be more confusing and harder to grasp for these younger individuals. **Gender** of the child is also a factor when dealing with a divorce. Commonly, girls will act more emotionally while boys tend to react in a more aggressive fashion. Other outside factors include social help from friends/ family, and how long there has been conflict between the parents, which will also play a factor in how the child handles a divorce (Burt 2008). Each case provides its own special needs and detail in which will ultimately decide how the outcome of the divorce will be. For this Synthesis I am going to describe each age group of children rather than children as a whole. I feel it is not possible to group all children together into one category when each clearly has its own reactions to their own age appropriate situation.

- Infants

Infants will not understand what has happened at such an early age; but the child will begin to react to the energy and environment that is being established pre and post divorce. Commonly the mood will change of the parent after the separation and could become neglectful of the child, therefore symptoms of anger and depression can and will become apparent to the infant and will change its overall thought of the environment.

The eventual outcome of this situation will ultimately be that the child will begin to see one parent more than another. The bond between the lesser known parent and the infant will widen with time if not visited regularly. Stranger anxiety, which can be common in early childhood, could be shown toward the lesser known parent.

- Early Childhood (3 – 5 years of age)

These are the children in Pre-School and Kindergarten aged classes. What can commonly occur with this young age group is that the energy and situation that the child is experiencing will lead to the child believing that they are the cause of the divorce. A fear can settle into the child of loneliness and the fear of being abandoned can become evident. The child may return to old habits such as bed wetting, fussiness and create a cling to older items and toys known as “security blankets.”

- School Aged Children (6-12 years of age)

Children in this age group will often think that there is still hope for their parents to be back together. The younger children in this age group will often have more grief toward the situation; they will feel abandoned by the other parent. Older children will begin to understand more why the divorce has happened. Often what can occur is the siding with one parent of the other and anger toward the opposing parent. (Tucker 1997)

- Adolescents (13-18 years of age)

It has been noted that a younger child can have a harder time coping with divorce than an older child. Older children hold the ability to cope and understand what is going on in the situation and how they must adjust to it. With adolescents we can see similar factors that we have seen earlier, such as anger, depression and abandonment, but we can

also find the upcoming of an adult. The child takes on responsibilities, such as in extreme cases, the taking care of a sibling when the custody parent is not around.

Adolescents will commonly feel that they must choose a parent rather than be interactive with both parents. The adolescent stage is where the child is most prone to outside misbehavior, use of illegal substances, stress and anti social behavior can also develop at this point. (Neher and Short 1998). (EAG1: k1, k2; EAG2: k2, k3, k4.)

Substance Abuse With Adolescents

In a 1998 study by Dr. Linda S. Neher and Dr. Jerome L. Short, surveys were distributed to two southeastern cities. The survey was distributed among children and teenagers between the ages of eleven and fourteen and asked to be given to their parents. Information on the survey included questions about relationships and habits that the parents of the children encountered, including any use of **substance abuse** between the children and the parents along with the relationships they had with their friends. The same questions were asked for **Single Parent homes** and non-Divorced homes. To ensure that the results would be accurate the subjects selected were even between the two categories of families. The results that Dr. Neher and Dr. Short came to were as expected: children and parents that came for Single Parent homes had significantly higher amounts of substance abuse problems, sometimes double in subcategories such as abuse of Marijuana, Alcohol and Tobacco related products than that of the homes where the parents were still together. A side fact that this study found was that the education levels between the two groups of families had a much larger separation than one would of predicted. Many of the households that still had an intact family had much higher high school graduation statistics and college attendance/graduation statistics than compared to

the parents of single parent families. This evidence suggests, according to Neher and Short, that past experiences with separation can have a devastating effect to the child and can effect inevitably the future outcome of the child's life and how they view marital status, academics and treatment of substances along with development (EGA 1: k1, k2)

Future Impact on Adolescents

Relationships with the parents and children during and after the initial divorce will ultimately affect how the child's relationship with the at home parent, and away parent, will be in the future. Research by Fabricius and Luecken showed that when there was minimal conflict between the fathers and children, the relationship was much better than homes where conflict between the parent and child is evident. The conclusion of the research is that the more time the child spent with the father the less parental conflict there was in the family (Fabricus and Luecken 2007). This research shows the reader that how the relationship between the parents is during the childhood will affect the relationships that those children will have with their parents in the future. This can also affect how the child views on marital status or commitment and how they feel a relationship should be handled. To conclude my research on the future impacts of divorce I analyzed a study by Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley and Markman, where adolescent couples that were engaged, were monitored to see if parental divorce played a role in their own views of their committed relationships. What the researcher's found supported the initial hypotheses.

The children who had been influenced or came from a divorced home showed lower commitment levels than that of still intact homes. On average the average length of themarriage between the 265 couples was 18 months (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley,

Markam 2008, Pg 791). The final conclusion for this information was that not the conflict of the relationship, but their own personal view inevitably affected the way the young adult view the relationship and lead to the separation/ divorce.

Divorce can have an immense effect on development process of children and adolescents. In general, divorce has an everlasting undesirable effect on a child or adolescent's social competence, his or hers academic performance, they way they will view authoritarian figures as well as many more adverse products of divorce. We have viewed that the effects divorce places on the child are unnecessary and must be properly handled in order to not have everlasting effects on the child.

Analysis

INTASC Standard number two states, *"The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development."* As an educator I feel it is necessary to understand the outside influences that children come to face while at such an early age. No child is the same as the next. In each individual case you must consider and provide learning opportunities to adjust the specific needs of that child.

The child's well being during divorce can be impacted by the constant movement from one parental figure to the next. It is necessary for the child sake that both parents take on the task of making sure that there is consistency within the child's academic performance and overall social behavior. **Parental involvement** is a critical aspect in the child's life in order to maintain a health well-being that will not lead to disorderly conduct, substance abuse and depression just to name a few consequences. Parents evoking **self-efficacy** within their child, will reinforce positive self-esteem and lead them

to believe in themselves.

As a teacher I plan to educate myself on how children's development can be effected by divorce though research and observations of divorced families and the outcomes. In studying divorce I have realized that possible academic problems may arise as an effect of divorce. Knowing this, if it is brought to my attention that one of my students is coming from a home with separated parents, I will make an effort to keep strong communication with each parent in assuring that the student is receiving the consistent expectations for academic achievement from both parental units. However, *I will hold every student regardless of family situation to the same academic standard.* As an educator I also plan *to make the learning environment for children from divorced families as well as intact homes interactive through learning activities that can encourage them to develop on a normal basis.* In my class, I will promote self-efficacy by giving my students obtainable tasks upon which they can achieve success. In my instructional practice, *I will provide my students opportunities to engage in group activities that can strengthen relationship between fellow peers that can help provide support suffering from effects of divorce.* (EGA 1: d2, d4)

Educational practices are necessary for the continued development of children, especially dealing with divorce. *I hope to challenge my students through educational activities that will help the students manage their personal development through guidance by myself.* (EGA 2: d2, d3, d4)(AYA 1: d2, d3, d4)

For me to fully understand the effects of such a delicate topic I must *continue my research on development of children and outside factors, including divorce, which may hinder the personal growth of any adolescent during childhood.* With today's

modern problems and obstacles that children are trying overcome, more research must be done in order to comprehend how the adolescent mind works, and how it deals with events like divorce.

Standard Summary (Education Majors Only)

- **Standard #1: Young Adolescent Development.**

“The early adolescence generalist understands the range of developmental characteristics of early adolescence within social, cultural, and societal contexts and uses this knowledge to facilitate student learning.”

Knowledge

1. understands the major concepts, principles, theories, and research of young adolescent development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and moral).
2. understands the range of individual differences which exists in young adolescents and the influence of this range on young adolescent behaviors and learning.

Dispositions

2. is positive, enthusiastic, and committed to students in this developmental period.
4. holds high expectations that are realistic for individual students' behavior and learning.

- **Standard #2: Healthy Development of Young Adolescents.**

“The early adolescence generalist demonstrates an understanding of the risk behaviors of young adolescents and the changes in family setting and society that affect their development by establishing a learning environment that promotes positive, productive, healthy development.”

Knowledge

2. recognizes potential risk behaviors that impact the healthy development of young adolescents.

3. is aware of changes in society that may put young adolescents at risk.
 - a. understands the range of family structures and the role the family plays in a young adolescent's healthy development.

Dispositions

2. is attentive to indications of challenges or difficulties that may affect healthy development.

3. takes responsibility for establishing a caring environment that supports the healthy development of young adolescents.

4. is committed to working with families and other adults to promote healthy development of young adolescents.

- Standard #1: The Development of Adolescents and Young Adults.

“The teacher of adolescents and young adults understands the range of developmental characteristics of adolescence including interpersonal, cultural, and societal contexts and uses this knowledge to facilitate student learning.”

Dispositions

2. is positive, enthusiastic, and committed to students in this developmental period.

3. respects and appreciates the range of individual developmental differences.

4. holds high expectations that are realistic for individual students' behavior and learning.

Citation

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