Understanding Gender Differences in Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Implications for School Counselors

Joe H. Brown and Pedro R. Portes

University of Louisville

Abstract

The present paper discusses some of the current issues confronting practitioners and researchers in understanding gender differences in children's adjustment to divorce. Gender differences in children's developmental adjustment to divorce are influenced by pre and post divorce development processes, parent expectation and children's coping abilities. Current research indicates that boys and girls are affected differentially by divorce with boys experiencing greater maladjustment resulting from divorce related processes. Recommendations are provided for practitioners who work with children of divorce and their families in the home and school.

Understanding Gender Differences in Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Implications for School Counselors

There is ample evidence that divorce can have adverse effects on children's well being (O'Connor, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1998). Longitudinal investigations illustrate the long term negative impact of divorce on families with children. Currently, approximately 50% of all first marriages will end in divorce (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). Children of divorce may be at higher risk for adjustment problems than children living in nuclear families and are less likely to adjust in the absence of parental support (Amato, 1993). Moreover, children in these families may also be differentially affected by divorce based on their gender (Beaty, 1995; Hetherington, 1991).

A review of the literature suggests that gender differences are mediated by a number of factors which contribute to children's divorce adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991; Vuchinich, Hetherington, Vuchinich, & Clingempeel, 1991). Some of these factors impact children prior to divorce, while other factors influence children following the divorce (Brown, Portes, & Christensen, 1989). Interactions among these factors are considered most likely to account for variations in children's adjustment, yet we know little about their relative importance. It should be noted that observed gender differences in children's divorce adjustment may vary due to pre-existing conditions that are independent of the divorce process. A brief review addresses this issue based on an empirical review of research on gender differences in adjustment with divorced groups. Purpose and a brief description of these factors and recommendations follows: This review should provide a better understanding of how divorce impacts male/female children differently.

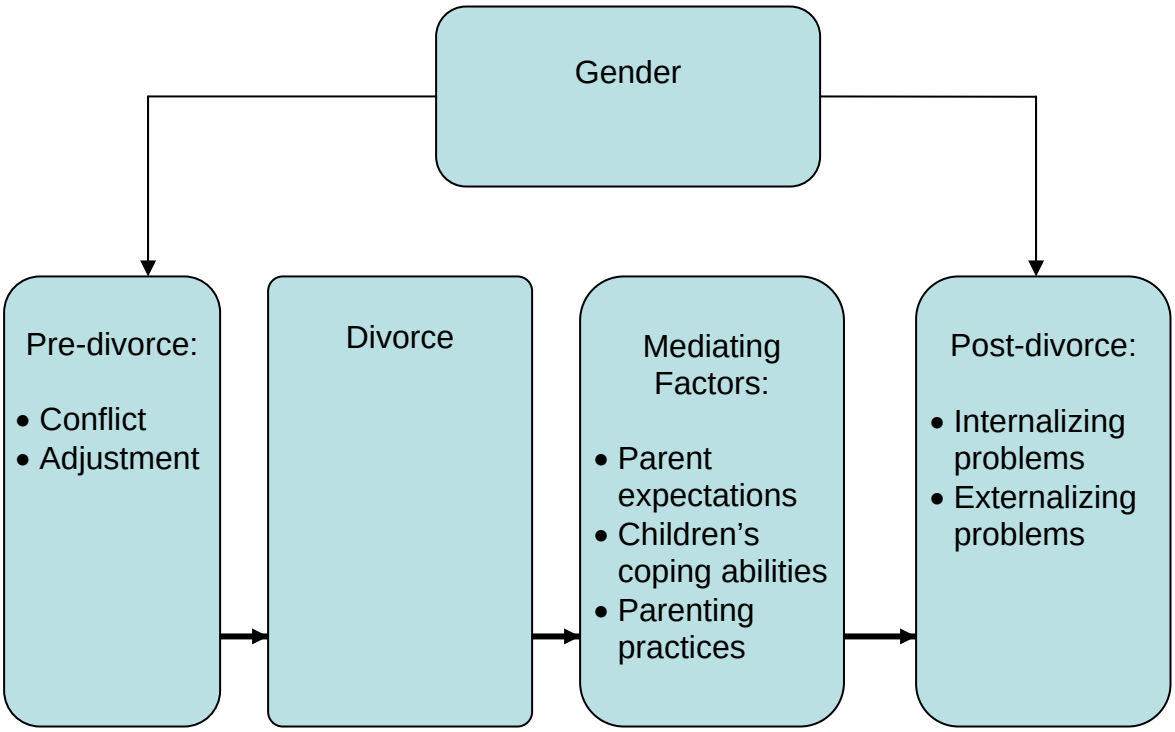
The role of gender in the course of daily parent-child interaction has received little attention. In effect, different, culturally-determined social development practices may underlie observed gender differences in children's behavior as noted by Majoribanks (1991) in his study of Anglo-Australian, Greek and Southern Italian families. However, a closer look at some of these developmental factors suggests that indeed gender differences can be expected. Neighbors & Wierson (1991) found differential vulnerability for boys and girls throughout adolescence. Boys exhibited more externalizing problems and less competence than girls during pre-adolescence. The stress of parental divorce did not affect this gender by age pattern. While some studies have found adolescent boys to exhibit more externalizing problems than girls (Kempton, Armistead, Wierson, & Forehand, 1991), at the time of divorce, others have not (Howell, Portes & Brown, 1997). During mid-adolescence girls exhibit more psychosomatic symptoms, and are more likely than boys to experience problems in functioning, and to express more dissatisfaction with available levels of social support (Frost & Pakiz, 1990).

Some research studies demonstrate that adolescent boys exhibit more conduct disorders at the time of divorce while adolescent girls experience an increase in depression (Hetherington, Bridges & Insabella, 1998). However, both male and female adolescents from divorced families exhibit higher rates of conduct disorders and depression than do those from non-divorced families. Moreover, female adolescents and young adults from divorced families are more likely than their male counterparts to dropout of high school and college. Likewise, male and female adolescents are similarly affected in the probability of becoming teenage parents (Hetherington et al., 1998).

In addition, several investigations found that adolescent males do not adapt as well as females to their parents divorce. Neilson (1999) suggests several reasons for these differences. First, divorced parents are more likely to triangulate adolescent males than females in their conflicts. Second, a divorced mother is more likely to make negative comments about her ex-spouse, often using their son as an adult confidant, protector, and helpmate, thus interfering with the son's relationship with his father. Finally, sons seem to experience more problems (e.g. academic, peer relationships, substance abuse, and mental health) than daughters by living with their un-married mothers. While these problems can occur in childhood they are more likely to increase in adolescence (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999).

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that certain factors may differentially affect male and female children at the time of divorce. (See Figure 1.). Some of these factors are operative before the divorce, while others mediate the effects on children at the time of divorce, and still others influence the children following divorce. It is important for counselors and family therapists to understand these factors and their implications so they can work more effectively with children of divorce.

Figure 1. Factors that differentially affect male and female children of divorce.



Pre Divorce

While boys experience greater maladjustment at the time of divorce than girls (Shaw, 1991; Wallerstein, 1991), evidence suggests that these differences may exist prior to divorce. Behar (1991) challenges Wallerstein's findings and notes that she has neglected to account for preexisting psychiatric diagnoses in parents, which could be genetically passed onto their children. This appeared to occur in 55% of Wallerstein's sample. Block, Block, & Gjerde (1986) found that the behaviors of boys as early as eleven years prior to separation or divorce were more noticeably affected by pre-divorce familial stress than girls. Indeed, boys from divorcing families manifested poor impulse control, aggression, and excessive energy prior to parental divorce, while girls from divorcing families did not manifest such problems. Boys may be diagnosed more frequently as a function of child/family conflicts that threaten parental control.

Considerable evidence suggests that marital conflict has a greater effect on boys than girls. Hess & Camara (1979), Hetherington, Cox & Cox (1986, 1982, 1978) and Kempton et al. (1991) are among those who have noted that boys are significantly more likely to exhibit signs of stress and aggression, particularly toward their parents, and that social relations and work effectiveness are more likely to be caught in parental conflict and vulnerable to maladjustment. Other investigators have reported similar findings in a variety of settings (Forehand, Wierson, Thomas, & Fauber, 1991).

Several studies support this pattern of findings with intact, conflictual marriages. Rutter (1971) found that conflict in intact families was related to school problems in boys but not in girls. Girls appear less vulnerable and, even when they are found to have conduct disorders, parental abnormality and discord are not significant predictors. Parish (1989) found significant relations between parent's ratings of marital conflict and their ratings of behavior problems at home for boys but not for girls.

Parental agreement in the socialization of children is associated with positive characteristics in boys but not with girls according to Block et al. (1986). Examples of these characteristics are social inhibition, extroversion, autonomy, empathy, resourcefulness, impulse control and intelligence. Consistent parental agreement is correlated significantly with intelligence for males (.33 in early adolescence and .45 with younger males) but not for females. Parental conflict is also related to differential parental salience (power and influence) of boys and girls (Leaper, Mauser, Kresen, & Powers, 1989). It appears that parental conflict has more adverse effects on boys than on girls (Amato, 1991, 1986; Lowery & Settle, 1985). This may be due to the stronger emotional bond between fathers and sons than fathers and daughters (Gecas &

Swalbe, 1986; Hill & Holmbeck, 1987). Likewise, because sons are more likely than daughters to be disciplined by both parents (Margolin & Patterson, 1975) discipline may be more inconsistent when parental conflict exists. Parental disagreement and conflict seems to create more psychological stress in boys than in girls and appears to represent a bipolar continuum with parental agreement.

Post Divorce

Post divorce parental conflict represents one of the most predictive variables of children's adjustment (Buchanan, Maccoby & Dornbusch, 1992).

A summary of this research indicates that boys from divorced families, in comparison with both girls from divorced families and boys from intact families, have higher incidence of problematic behaviors which tend to be classified as "negative acting out" including depression, oppositional conduct and impulsivity (Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, & McLoughlin, 1983). In the two year follow-up girls clearly improved on social, emotional, and academic criteria while boys deteriorated (Guidubaldi et al. 1983). However, Johnston, Gonzalez and Campbell (1987) found that at a 2.5 year follow-up girls in high conflict families were more depressed and withdrawn. Peterson and Zill (1986) found that both boys and girls of divorce had more behavioral problems when the opposite sex parent-retained custody of the child. Similarly, Camara and Resnick (1989) found that boys in the mother custody and girls in the father custody households revealed the highest levels of aggression and behavior problems and lowest levels of general self-esteem. Since divorced mothers retain child custody in over 90% of the divorces (Glick, 1979), boys would be expected to have more difficulty adjusting to divorce than girls. Others have examined the effect of the child's sex in a

variety of settings (Hetherington et al., 1982; Kurdek & Berg, 1983) and have reported similar and consistent findings: boys are more likely than girls to experience symptoms reflecting poor adjustment to divorce. Boys appear to adjust more positively, however, to mother-custody stepfamilies than girls. Vuchinich et al., (1991) found that girls had greater difficulty interacting with their stepfather than boys.

While many researchers agree that boys have more problems than girls adjusting to divorce academically (Kaye, 1989), behaviorally and in socio-emotional areas (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1984), it is unclear whether gender differences are due to an interaction between child gender and gender of the residential parent (family structure), or due to the type of behavior being measured (i.e. externalizing vs. internalizing) (Howell et al., 1997). In an extensive review of literature on gender differences among children of divorce, Zaslow (1989) reports that boys are more likely to have problems when living in the custody of an un-remarried mother, whereas living with an un-remarried mother or with a father may be more detrimental for girls. Boys in mother-custody arrangement tend to be more likely than girls to experience depression/withdrawal (Peterson & Zill, 1986) and more likely than those in father-custody to be aggressive, and have problems in behavior and self esteem (Camara & Resnick, 1989); and more likely to exhibit behavioral problems than boys in intact families (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Likewise, girls in father-custody households have been reported to display more antisocial behavior than boys (Peterson & Zill, 1986); to be more aggressive, and have more problems in behavior and self esteem than girls living in mother-custody households (Camara & Resnick, 1989).

The higher adjustment among those living with the same-sex parents might be due to the presence of a role model for sex identity development (Kaye, 1989; Peterson & Zill, 1986). In fact, Hetherington's (1991) research indicates that the mother's re-marriage might mediate positive adjustment among boys as they may benefit from the entry of a stepfather as a role model and source of support, but increase problematic behavior for girls as they might perceive the new marriage as a threat to the mother-daughter bond (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). However, Block et al., (1986) found that as early as eleven years before the separation/divorce, boy's behavior was more problematic than girls, suggesting that material custody is not the sole factor in adjustment. Rather, pre-divorce family process seems to have an impact, echoing prior research which stresses the role of conflict in child adjustment.

Rather than seeing child adjustment as a direct result of the post-divorce family structure, several researchers have suggested that while girls and boys may be equally disturbed by their parent's divorce, boy's may primarily exhibit their disturbance through externalizing behaviors (e.g. aggression, delinquency, substance abuse); girls, through internalizing behavior (e.g. anxiety, depression, somatic complaints). (Zaslow, 1989) Zaslow reports that girl's problems therefore are less likely to come to the attention of parents or health care professionals. Zaslow also reports that when studies do not specify the presence of a stepparent, boys appear to exhibit more externalizing behavior than girls, yet internalizing is exhibited by both genders. When a stepparent is involved, girls display more externalizing and internalizing behaviors than boys. Zaslow's findings suggest that both family structure and the nature of the problem (externalizing) contribute to gender differences.

It is interesting that in the few studies which report more adjustment problems among females the differences were found primarily in areas of depression and dissatisfaction with social support (Frost & Pakiz, 1990), and child reported dissatisfaction and distress (e.g. internalizing behaviors) (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989).

In summary, it appears that conflict in the intact, pre-divorce or post-divorce family is detrimental to children's well-being. Since parental conflict affect male/female children of divorce differentially, it may be that male children are more likely to experience adverse effects because their problems (e.g. acting out, aggression, etc.) are easier to detect. Practitioners who work with children need to utilize parental reports as well as children's reports to obtain a more complete understanding of children's well-being in divorcing families.

Mediating Factors: Parent Expectations for Male/Female Children

It appears that gender differences can also be attributed to differing expectations that parents have for boys and girls. Hetherington & Kelly (2002) report in a longitudinal study of 1400 families of divorce that boys get less support from overstressed mothers than girls, and often have more difficulty in adjusting to divorce. The authors note that a combination of boys being demanding, oppositional, noisy, and physical makes parenting a young son more exhausting and difficult than a daughter. The loss of another male presence may further complicate adjustment; the lack of a father or other intimate male adult seems to affect young boys more. Preadolescent boys often benefit from the continued environment of a caring authoritative, non-custodial father, stepfather or grandfather.

Moreover, Hetherington reports that girl's post-divorce adjustment is easier because they get more support from their mothers. This occurs perhaps because they are less demanding and easier to parent. Likewise, Eme (1979) found that parent's annoyance threshold is lower for females engaging in deviant behavior. Parents are more likely to tolerate difficult girls than boys and to seek professional help for boys. In addition, girls are less affected by the lack of the father's relationship than boys (Santrock, and Warshak, 1979).

There also appears to be evidence that parents hold different views for boys and girls' aggressive behavior (Feshback, 1970). The aggression of females is more likely to assume a pro-social function, such as complying with rules, while male's aggression is likely to be less constructive; girls are also more likely to exhibit verbal aggression which is attributed to greater language maturity (Piel, 1990). Yet, Libby and Aries (1989) showed that with young children, boys appear more concerned with coping with aggressive drives and channeling them into mastery than girls who exhibit caretaking and responding to the needs of others. Girls' maturity may thus interact with sex-differentiated socialization by adults.

Children's Coping Abilities

Singularly, the most significant mediator of stress is the child's own competence in dealing with problems and distress of divorce. Guidubaldi et al., (1983) found that girls demonstrated better adjustment than boys in the majority of social competency measures which included teacher reports, locus of control, the Hahnemann Profiles (Spivack & Swift, 1977), and the Vineland Teacher Questionnaire (1981). Even when there was control for intelligence, girls exhibited better adjustment. In this study,

parental marital status was considered in a separate analysis by sex. The authors found that divorce status was associated with lower levels of competency for boys, but not for girls, except in a measure of independent learning.

One hypothesis concerning sex-differentiated findings is that girls are able to utilize teachers as a primary source of gratification and support at the time of divorce (Kelly and Wallerstein, 1979). For girls, school tends to remain a stable support system during divorce while boys have been shown to engage in fights with peers during this time (Goldman, Rosenzweig & Lutter, 1980). Sheldon (1990), after examining preschool responses to stress, noted that, for the most part, girls intended to mitigate conflict and preserve harmony utilizing compromise and evasion. Boys, under identical situational stress, tended to prolong the period of confrontation and conflict and employ more persistence, insistence, appeals to the rules, and threats of physical violence.

While divorce related stress impacts both sexes equally, females tend to cope more effectively with problems. Dorval & Grundy (1990), using videotape conversations of sixth and tenth grade children found avoidance of conflict and mutual conversation exchange in girls, while boys exhibited a lack of empathy and “give and take” in such conversation. The boys in this study tended to “one-up” each other with stories to solve their peer’s problems rather than attempt to establish mutual understanding or communality. Moreover, the emphasis in boy’s conversations tended to be on competition and winning rather than cooperation. Erikson and McKnight (1990) explored family conversation surrounding mediation disputes and reported similar findings.

Finally, boys’ maladjustment is greater in general except for situations where remarriage needs to be addressed (Zaslow, 1989). It seems that any conclusions with

respect to gender differences in post divorce adjustment needs to differentiate between these male and female populations rather than to lump them together for comparison. Long-term gender differences in adjustment to divorce cannot be confounded with adjustment to remarriage conceptually for a number of reasons. Just as father absence is a key issue for children of divorce and particularly for boys, the dynamics presented by adjustment to a step-father in most cases requires attention to not only the developmental level of children, but also the duration and nature of the single parent form.

Parenting Practices

The quality of parenting practices appears to differentially mediate the effects on male/female children of divorce. Hyatt (1999) reports that the quality of mother's parenting is the only factor related to both internalizing and externalizing problems of children of divorce. Her findings indicate the quality of the custodial mother's parenting and father's involvement in parenting are key indicators in boy's externalizing problems, while mother's parenting practices and post-divorce conflict are more likely to increase girl's risk for emotional and behavioral problems. Moreover, the quality of father's parenting appears to have little effect on association between girl's antisocial behavior. The quality of the mother's parenting appears to be the most critical factor. The author notes that boys in divorced families experience higher rates of depression that those in intact families, even when their mothers show positive psychological adjustment and practical competent parenting.

Implications for School Counselors

In designing divorce education programs/interventions for children one needs to consider the different types of mediating factors that impact the gender of the child. They include: (a) the different ways boys and girls handle divorce-related stress, (b) the quality of the custody arrangement, particularly the relationship with an opposite sex parent, (c) the age and competence of the child during the divorce process (including developmental and cognitive ability levels), (d) the resources and support systems available to the child, (e) parent's co-parental relationship and the relationship between each parent and the child, and (f) the children's coping mechanisms.

Recommendations for Girls

Listen and closely observe their behavior. Because girls are more likely to internalize their problems (e.g. depression) it is critical that parents and teachers closely look for signs (e.g. isolation, withdrawal, etc.) that may indicate problems. It is important to listen and encourage them to express their feelings. Moreover, parents and teachers must affirm their feelings and contradict any unhelpful messages (e.g., I was responsible for the divorce) they may be giving to themselves.

Help them endure comfortable feelings. Girls may need help with feelings that overwhelm them. They need to know that it is okay to feel afraid, angry, sad, or anxious. Parents and teachers need to help them to understand their feelings and to correct any misperceptions (e.g., my father doesn't care about me).

Talk to girls about their sexuality. It is critical for parents to discuss sexual issues with girls, since adolescent girls, at the time of divorce, are likely to be engaged in early sexual behavior, leading to a greater risk of teenage parenting and dropping out of

school. These discussions assist girls to identify their “likes” and “dislikes” and help them to state their preferences so they can stand up to “inappropriate contact”. In addition, it is a critical time to teach them to respect their uniqueness. It is important to encourage girls to be discriminating and true to their feelings so they can walk away from poor relationships.

Help girls to attribute their successes to themselves. This requires helping them to trust their own intuitions, choices and decisions. Parents and teachers need to affirm their social skills, intelligence and ability to solve problems so they believe in themselves and feel worthwhile. This is particularly so at the time of divorce when they may feel a sense of rejection and unworthy of love.

Teach girls to support each other. Girls tend to get more support for themselves than boys, but they also report more dissatisfaction with their support systems. It is critical to help them to identify peers who can help them through this difficult period in their lives and assist them to form groups where they can express their pain to one another. It is also important to teach girls to get support from one another as a way of caring for themselves.

Help girls to develop better relationships with their stepfathers. Since girls seem to experience more problems with their stepfathers, they need the biological parent’s permission to like or eventually love this new adult in their lives. Moreover, it is important for parents to keep the children informed about the relationship and reassure them that they will not replace their father and they are still loved as much as before.

Encourage girls to express themselves. Girls often hold back problem solving situations and may need more support to express their opinions. When parents and

teachers affirm their ideas they will gain more confidence and are more likely to express themselves. Girls can be empowered by supporting statements such as “I think”, “I believe”, “I need”, etc. Girls can be given opportunities to practice through role plays or other performance activities.

Recommendations for Boys

Support boy’s expressions of feelings. Boys have difficulty expressing their feelings and getting support for themselves. It is important to remind boys they are not alone and there are other children at school and the neighborhood whose parents are divorced. Because boys experience more problems in mother custody households and girls in father custody households, programs interventions should teach children appropriate ways to request parental contact. If they do not feel comfortable talking with a parent or teacher, encourage them to talk with a trusted adult (e.g. coach, neighbor, youth counselor, etc.).

Develop alternate ways to express feelings. It may be important to develop alternate ways to express feelings. For example, physical activities such as, running, jumping rope, role playing, or playing are great ways to express emotions. Moreover, music, drawing or drawing pictures can be a useful way to express themselves. Likewise, these activities are useful for calming a child and helping him to feel more in control of his emotions.

Use boys’ healthy ways to express their behavior. Because boys tend to externalize their emotions they often need to learn healthy ways to deal with divorce related stress (e.g. anger). Parents and teachers need to teach boys how to listen to other’s point of view, and how to work through conflicts in healthy and respectful ways.

In dealing with self disclosure boys are more likely to respond to hypothetical divorce relationships while girls may be more willing to express their feelings about personal situations.

Teach relationship skills to boys. Boys often lack skills to develop relationships with others and may need more practice than girls to practice social skills particularly dealing with divorce-related problems. A child who is not getting along with others may be told what to do (e.g. stop telling on others, quit hitting your sister, etc.), but they also may need practice in implementing those skills. This is particularly the case for boys, who often do know how to get support for themselves at the time of divorce. This often requires a parent or teacher modeling or demonstrating the desired behavior (e.g. starting a conversation, maintaining a conversation, expressing appreciation, asking for help, expressing encouragement, etc.). Behaviors are more likely to be learned when they are reinforced (e.g. “I like your ideas”) directly. In addition, small groups can be helpful to practice or role play the behaviors.

Help boys to control their own behavior. In some cases, boys may need help controlling their own behaviors. This often requires early warning signs (e.g. triggers to misbehavior) Early warning signs are often cognitions (e.g. “He doesn’t like me” “she blames me for the divorce”). Assessment of cognitions is essential if the parent or teacher is to fully understand the problem maintaining pattern (e.g. between mother-son) and the potential for change in the relationship.

Help boys to disengage from parental conflict. Because boys are more likely than girls to be triangulated into parental conflicts, they may need ways to disengage from these conflicts. Boys need to learn how to survive parental conflict such as leaving the

room when parents argue, understanding that it is not the child's responsibility to get them to stop arguing, avoid taking sides or being the messenger between parents ("I think you need to share that with dad"). Finally, boys who feel "caught" in their parent's conflict must be encouraged to find someone they can trust and talk to them.

Conclusions

It is important for school counselors to develop or identify divorce adjustment programs that are sensitive to gender differences in male and female children. School counselors should select programs addressing critical factors that affect gender differences in children's post-divorce adjustment. These factors include helping children: (1) resolve divorce-related anxieties, confusion and blame; (2) express anger in divorce-related situations; (3) understand feelings and changing misperceptions about divorce; (4) develop coping skills for dealing with divorce; (5) learn how to solve divorce-related problems, and (6) establish support systems of friends and relatives. Such programs are widely available through collaboration with family court and community based service providers. School counselors should document program effectiveness to best refine practices and promote desired outcomes for male and female children.

Divorce seems to be a marker variable, indexing a greater likelihood that children experience intense stress relative to their gender. The literature does suggest that boys appear to have a more difficult time adjusting to divorce than girls. However, these differences in adjustment are likely to depend on multiple factors such as sex of the custodial parent, parenting style, marital status, parent-child relationships, and amount of contact with the non-custodial parent. Gender differences in adjustment may be understood in a dynamic fashion as mediating factors (e.g. pre and post-divorce,

children's coping abilities, and parent expectations) affecting the individual in a particular setting. These factors interact differentially on children in different settings (e.g. home, school, etc.) Thus, gender differences pertaining to adjustment may be better understood by examining the child's behavior in specific contexts.

References

Allison, P. D. & Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. (1989) How marital dissolution affects children: Variations by age and sex. *Developmental Psychology, 25,* 540-549.

Amato, P. R. (1993) Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypotheses, and empirical support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55,* 23-38.

Amato, P. (1991). Parental abuse during childhood and depression later in life. *Sociological Quarterly, 32,* 543-556.

Amato, P., & Keith, B. (1991) The consequences of divorce for attitudes toward divorce and gender roles. *Journal of Family Issues, 12*(3), 306-322.

Amato, P (1986) Marital conflict, the parent-child relationship and child self-esteem. *Family Relations Journal of Applied Family and Child Studies, 35*(3), 403-410.

Beaty, L. A. (1995) Effects of paternal absence on male adolescents peer relations and self-image. *Adolescence, 30,* 873-900.

Behar, D. (1991) "The long-term effects of divorce on children: A review": Comment. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 30*(6), 1023.

Block, J. H., Block, J., & Gjerde, P. (1986) The personality of children prior to divorce: A prospective study. *Child Development, 57,* 827-840.

Brown, J., Portes, P., & Christensen, D. (1989) Understanding divorce stress on children: Implications for research and practice. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 17*(4), 315-325.

Buchanan, C., Maccoby, E., & Dornbusch, S. (1992) Adolescents and their families after divorce: Three residential arrangements compared. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 2*(3), 261-291.

Buchanan, C., Maccoby, E., & Dornbusch, S. (1991) Caught between parents: Adolescent's experience in divorced homes. *Child Development, 62*(5), 1008-1029.

Camara, K. A., & Resnick, G. (1989) Psychological androgyny and personality adjustment in college and psychiatric populations. *Sex Roles, 8*(8), 835-851.

Carter, E. A., & McGoldrick, M. (1999) *The expanded family life cycle: Individual, family and social perspectives.* (3rd ed.) Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Dorval, B., & Grundy, F. (1990) The development of arguing in discussions among peers. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 36*(3), 389-409.

Eme, R. E. (1979) Sex differences in childhood psychopathology: A review. *Psychological Bulleting, 86*(3), 574-575.

Erikson, S., & McKnight, M. (1990) Mediating spousal abuse divorces. *Mediation Quarterly, 7*(4), 377-388.

Feshbach, S. (1970) *Aggression.* In P. Mussen (Ed.), Carmichael's manual of child psychology #2, New York: Wiley.

Forehand, R., Wierson, M., Thomas, A., & Fauber, R., (1991) A short-term longitudinal examination of a young adolescent functioning following divorce: The role of family factors. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 19*(1), 97-111.

Frost, A., & Pakiz, B. (1990) The effects of marital disruption on adolescents: Time as a dynamic. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 60*(4), 544-555.

Gecas, V. & Swalbe, M. (1986) Parental behavior and adolescent self-esteem. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48,* 37-46.

Gjerde, P., Block, J., & Block, J. H. (1991) The preschool family context of 18 year olds with depressive symptoms: A prospective study. *Journal of Research on Adolescents, 1*(1), 63-91.

Glick, P. C. (1979) Children of divorced parents in demographic perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 35,* 170-182.

Goldman, J., Rosenweig, C., & Lutter, A. (1980) Effect of similarity of ego identity status on interpersonal attraction. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 9,* 153-162.

Guidubaldi, J., & Perry, J. D. (1984) Divorce, socioeconomic status, and children's cognitive-social competence at school entry. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 54,* 459-468.

Guidubaldi, J., Perry, J. D., Cleminshaw, H. K., & McLoughlin, C. (1983) The impact of parental divorce on children: Report on the nationwide NASP study. *School Psychology Review, 12*(3), 300-323.

Hetherington, E. M. (1991) Presidential address: Families, lies, and videotapes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 1*(4), 323-348.

Hetherington, E. M., Bridges, M., & Insabella, G. M. (1998) What matters? What does not? Five perspectives on the association between marital transitions and children's adjustment. *American Psychologist, 53*(2), 167-184.

Hetherington, E. M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1986) Long-term effects of divorce and remarriage on the adjustment of children. *Annual Progress in Child Psychiatry, 24*(5), 407-429.

Hetherington, E. M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1982) Effects of divorce on parents and children. In M. Lamb (Ed.), *Nontraditional families: Parenting and child development.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates

Hetherington, E. M., Cox, M., & Cox, R. (1978) The aftermath of divorce. In J. H. Stevens, Jr. & M. Mathews (Eds.), Mother-child, father-child relationships (pp. 149-176). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2002) *For better or for worse: Divorce reconsidered.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Hetherington, E. M., & Stanley-Hagan, M. (1999) The adjustment of children with divorced parents: Risk and resiliency. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, 40,* 129-140.

Hess, R. D. & Camara, K. A. (1979) Post-divorce family relationships as mediating factors in the consequences of divorce for children. *Journal of Social Issues, 35*(4), 79-96.

Howell, S. H., Portes, P. & Brown, J. H. (1997) Gender and age differences in child adjustment to parental separation. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 27,* 141-158.

Hill, J., & Holmbeck, G. (1987) Disagreements about rules in families with seventh-grade girls and boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 16*(3), 221-246.

Hyatt, K. (1999) Children's adjustment to divorce largely in hands of parents, with one exception: Dad's departure depresses boys. *Journal of Marriage and Family.*

Johnston, J. R., Gonzalez, R., & Campbell, L. E. (1987) Ongoing post-divorce conflict and child disturbance. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 15*(4), 493-509.

Kaye, S. H. (1989) The impact of divorce on children's academic performance. *Journal of Divorce, 3,* 283-298.

Kelly, J. B., & Wallerstein, J. S. (1979) The effects of parental divorce: Experiences of the child in early latency. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 46,* 20-32.

Kempton, T., Armistead, L., Wierson, M., & Forehand, R. (1991) Presence of a sibling as a potential buffer following parental divorce: An examination of young adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 20*(4), 434-438.

Kurdek, L., & Berg, B. (1983) Correlates of children's adjustment to their parents' divorce. *New Directions of Child Development, 19,* 47-60.

Leaper, C., Mauser, S., Kresen, A., & Powers, S. (1989) Adolescent-parents interactions in relation to adolescents' gender and ego development pathway: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 9*(3), 335-361.

Libby, M., & Aries, E. (1989) Gender differences in preschool children's narrative fantasy. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13*(3), 293-306.

Lowery, C. R., & Settle, S. A. (1985) Effects of divorce on children: Differential impact of custody and visitation patterns. *Family Relations Journal of Applied Family and Child Studies, 34*(4), 455-463.

Majoribanks, K. (1991) Ethnicity, family environment and social-status attainment: A follow-up analysis. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 22*(1), 15-23.

Margolin, G., & Patterson, G. R. (1975) Differential consequences provided by fathers and mothers for their sons and daughters. *Developmental Psychology, 11,* 537-538.

Neighbors, B., & Wierson, M. (1991) The transition of adolescence: The role of gender and stress in problem behavior and competence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 32*(6), 929-937.

Neilson, L. (1999) Stepmothers: Why so much stress? A review of the research. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 30,* 115-148.

O'Connor, T. G., Hetherington, E. M. & Reiss, D. (1998) Family systems and adolescent development: Shared and non-shared risk and protective factors in non-divorced and remarried families. *Development and Psychology, 10,* 353-375.

Peterson, J. & Zill, N. (1986) Marital disruption, parent/child relationships and behavior problems in children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48*(2), 295-307.

Piel, J. A. (1990) Unmasking sex and social class differences in childhood aggression: The case for language maturity. *Journal of Educational Research, 84*(2), 100-106.

Rutter, M. (1971) Parent-child separation: Psychological effects on the children: *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 12,* 233-260.

Santrock, J. W., & Warshak, R. A. (1979) Father custody and social development in boys and girls. *Journal of Social Issues, 35*(4), 112-125.

Shaw, D. (1991) The effects of divorce on children's adjustment: Review and implications. *Behavior Modification, 18*(4), 456-485.

Sheldon, A. (1990) Pickle fights: Gendered talk in preschool disputes. *Discourse Processes, 31*(1), 5-31.

Spivack, G., & Swift, M. (1977) The Hahnemann High School Behavior Rating Scale. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 5*(3), 299-307.

Vuchinich, S., Hetherington, E. M., Vuchinich, R., & Clingempeel, W. G. (1991) Parent/child interaction and gender differences in early adolescents' adaptation to stepfamilies. *Developmental Psychology, 27*(4), 618-626.

Wallerstein, J. (1991) The long term effects of divorce on children: A review. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 30*(3), 349-360.

Zaslow, M. (1989) Sex differences in children's response to parental divorce: 2. Samples, variables, ages and sources. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59*(1), 118-141.

Biographical Sketches

Joe Brown received his Ph.D. in counseling from Indiana University. He is currently a Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy, Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville. He is the Director of the Families in Transition Program, a divorce education program that helps parents and children cope more effectively with problems that result from divorce. The program operates in school and family resource centers in over 100 communities throughout the United States and the Republic of Ireland. Dr. Brown has co-authored articles and books on family therapy and children's adjustment to divorce.

Pedro Portes received his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Florida State University. His research and scholarship interests have focused on cultural influences on educational achievement, parent-child interactions and children's divorce adjustment. He is the primary author of the Divorce Adjustment Inventory which measures children's adjustment to divorce. He has co-authored books and articles on educational inequality, gender differences in children's adjustment to divorce and character education. He has received numerous awards for his research and last year received the AERA Division Award in Human Development.