Divorce, Academic Performance, and Race: An Analysis of Divorce’s Effects on Adolescence

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Introduction

Divorce is a growing issue in the United States. With divorce rates nearly doubling from 1% to 2%. Since 1970, it is clear that it is an issue that children who come from disadvantaged homes that are sometimes divorced often are less likely to achieve higher academic success rather then those from regular two parent homes. This could be due to conditions such as living in poverty, parental relationship status, and parental involvement. These factors hold a large influence on the academic success of children coming from divorced households.[1]

Methods & Materials

Research was conducted by analyzing a number of academically peer reviewed articles on the topic.

- Specific key terms helped find these articles. Those key term were academic achievement, divorce, parental involvement, adolescents, family structure and physiological issues.
- Jeynes (2005) used a 1992 National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS). This study uses a nationally representative sample and also examines the issue of parental involvement.
- Kuan, Yang (2000) used data from a student and parent questionnaire to construct variables.

Findings

Table 3 lists the betas for divorce, remarriage, and the other variables under study in the data set. The largest regression was in the divorce column for the math test, which was -.14%. The reading test effected by divorce was -.8 and for Science, Social Studies, and Composite, they were all -.11. This basically states that divorce had the most negative effect on a students grades. You can also see that the most positive effect on this data was if the parents had discussions with their children about school.

Table 4 shows us the effects of divorce, then having a parent remarry. The pattern of regression was different in this case. Math and Science had a -.12, Social Studies and Reading had a -.9, Also, black children had the worst effect on their grades ranging from -.49. The effects of remarriage didn’t exceed statistical significance. The results tell us that children that have divorced parents are less successful academically.

Sociological Perspectives

- The interactionist theory may argue that academic success has no relation to parental involvement or divorce.
- A functionalist theory would argue that a parent’s role has a direct effect on their children’s academic performance. If a child’s parents stay intact, the child is more likely to be academically successful.
- A conflict theorist may argue that because of the differences in power between parents, divorce results. Divorce in turn will negatively effect the child’s academic achievement.

Conclusions

From the analysis we found that divorce negatively effects all races. Adolescents of divorce in the Black, Native American and Hispanic races all suffered academically from divorce in the fields of study. However children of divorced parents in Asian families performed higher in the fields of reading, math and social studies. They did remain the same in science. The levels of parental involvement doesn’t not give conclusive evidence that the child can overcome the overall effects of divorce. [4]

References