

Evidence-Based Counseling Interventions With Children of Divorce:

Implications for Elementary School Counselors

Marianne E. Connolly

Johns Hopkins University

Eric J. Green

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

### Abstract

Parental divorce has become increasingly common for large numbers of families in schools (Lamden, King, & Goldman, 2002). This article addresses the effects of divorce on children and protective factors supporting their adjustment. Evidence-based interventions for children of divorce in elementary school counseling programs are discussed. School-based consultation, the Children of Divorce Intervention Program, and the Children's Support Group are three evidence-based practices described. Implications for schools counselors are provided to help integrate research findings and practice.

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Children of divorce comprise a significant portion of the U.S. school population. Each year in the United States, more than one million children experience parental divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Projections indicate that by age 18, approximately 40% of children will experience their parents' divorce. Because divorce affects a significant number of children, a body of empirical literature has emerged addressing its impact (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Hipke, Wolchik, Sandler, & Braver, 2002; Hoyt, Cowen, Pedro-Carroll, & Gillis, 1990).

Empirical research confirms that children of divorce are at an increased risk for the development of psychological, behavioral, social, and academic problems (Amato, 2000; Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Emery, 1999; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998; Kelly, 2000; Simons & Associates, 1996). Amato and Keith (1991) and Amato (2001) published meta-analyses of studies comparing the well-being of children of divorce with that of children of parents who were married to each other. Results from both studies indicated that children from divorced families scored significantly lower on a variety of outcomes: (a) academic achievement, (b) conduct, (c) psychological adjustment, and (d) well-being. Research shows that serious problems related to the effects of divorce can persist into adulthood. Researchers have found a 39% increase in the incidences of mental health problems in children of divorce as compared to their peers from two-parent families at age 23 (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin, & Kiernan, 1995) and an 85% increase at age 33 (Rodgers, Power, & Hope, 1997). Although children of divorce are at greater risk for adjustment

difficulties, a number of mediating factors shape the variation in children's responses to divorce and how they cope (Greene, Anderson, Doyle, & Riedelbach, 2006; Pedro-Carroll, 2005).

Given the high prevalence of divorce and its potentially negative effects, the utilization of effective prevention programs has great significance (Wolchik et al., 2000). Prevention researchers have shown that interventions can improve children's postdivorce resilience indicated by improved outcomes following the stress of parental divorce (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994; Wolchik et al.). School counselors are challenged to utilize evidence-based preventative interventions designed to reduce risk factors, build competencies, and promote resilient outcomes for children of divorce (Pedro-Carroll, Sutton, & Wyman, 1999). School counselors confirmed the importance of the issue of divorce in a study investigating their perceptions of high interest research topics. Approximately 74% of the participants in the study rated divorce and family issues as a very important and relevant research issue (Bauman et al., 2002.).

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize central areas of relevant empirical literature on the topic of children of divorce with implications specifically for elementary school counselors. Children's adjustment to divorce, evidence-based school counseling programs, and empirically-based interventions with children of divorce are discussed. When evaluating literature on the protective factors that build resilience, school counselors should be informed about children's adjustment during or after a divorce and link these findings to selecting empirically-based interventions. School counselors need to be aware of the effects of divorce on children, the mediating factors

that help children adjust, and recognize the importance of utilizing evidence-based interventions. We propose that the findings from the current literature can facilitate school counselors' decision-making abilities to address all children's academic, career, and social success within comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs.

### Children's Adjustment Following Divorce

#### *Effects of Divorce on Children*

*Externalizing behaviors.* Parental divorce doubles the risk of children demonstrating externalizing behavioral problems (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Compared to 10% to 15% of children in nondivorced families, studies reveal that 17% to 25% of children in divorced and remarried families demonstrate clinically significant internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992; McLanahan, 1999; Simons & Associates, 1996). The largest reported effects are indicated in externalizing behaviors, such as conduct disorders, antisocial behaviors, and problems with authority figures (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Compared to children in nondivorced households, preadolescent children in divorced and remarried families show increased levels of (a) aggression, (b) noncompliance, (c) disobedience, (d) inappropriate classroom conduct, and (e) decreased self-regulation (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003).

*Internalizing problems.* Children of divorce present an increased risk for internalizing problems, including higher levels of depression, anxiety, and compromised self-esteem (Bynum & Durm, 1996; Hoyt et al., 1990; Pedro-Carroll, Cowen, Hightower, & Guare, 1986). However, the association between family structure and internalizing problems is inconsistent and typically weaker than effects related to externalizing

symptoms and academic achievement (Amato, 2001; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992; Hetherington, 1999). Amato and Keith's (1991) meta-analysis of 92 studies compared the well-being of children of divorce in single-parent families with children living in nondivorced families. The mean effect size was  $-.08$  ( $p < .001$ ) for internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety. More than two thirds of studies found that children of divorce scored lower on measures of well-being than children in nondivorced households. The literature describes variation in children's long-term reactions to divorce. Typical early responses are sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, confusion, loyalty conflicts between parents, and a yearning for parents who no longer reside in the family home (Clulow, 1990; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989; Pedro-Carroll, 2001). A study of second and third graders from divorced families indicated that they were more likely to have general school adjustment issues (Hoyt et al., 1990). The majority of children from divorced families seem well-adjusted, although there are differences in the average psychological well-being of children from married families as compared to divorced families (Amato, 1994, 2001; Hetherington, 1999).

*Academic issues.* Children of divorce are at risk for lower academic performance than their peers from nondivorced families (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; McLanahan, 1999; Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, & Sarlin, 1994). The modest differences decrease but do not disappear when income and intellectual ability are controlled. Teachers rate children from divorced families higher on factors such as heightened anxiety surrounding academic failure, the inability to reflect, irrelevant talk, and inattention. This may indicate that the children's academic achievement deficiencies are partially attributable to classroom behaviors that interfere with learning (Emery, 1999). Research

indicates that children of divorce attend school less, watch more television, do less homework, and have less parental supervision of their schoolwork (McLanahan, 1999). These factors may contribute to diminished academic functioning. Academic functioning declines less precipitously when fathers are involved in the child's education and schoolwork after the separation (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997). Although divorce increases the risk for adjustment problems in children and adolescents, researchers have identified protective factors that can moderate the risks associated with divorce for children (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

### *Protective Factors*

Protective factors function as *shock absorbers* and weaken the positive correlation between divorce-related events and children's level of stress (Rutter, 1987). These factors typically attenuate children's negative psychological or behavioral outcomes following parental divorce. Cognitions and coping styles can act as protective factors as they influence children's adjustment to divorce and remarriage (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). One protective factor identified in research on children of divorce is an active coping style. Children using active coping that involves problem solving and positive restructuring demonstrated an increase in their feelings of confidence in their ability to cope and adjusted to divorce more quickly (Sandler, Tein, Mehta, Wolchik, & Ayers, 2000; Sandler, Tein, & West, 1994). Conversely, children who have an external locus of control, low self-efficacy, self-blame for the divorce, and rely upon distraction or avoidance are at an increased risk of difficulties (Bussell, 1995; Kim, Sandler, & Tein, 1997; Mazur, Wolchik, & Sandler, 1992; Sandler et al., 1994).

Another protective factor is realistic appraisal of control. One study indicated that children's perceived inability to control divorce outcomes might be particularly relevant because they often encounter stressors they cannot control (Sandler, Kim-Bae, & MacKinnon, 2000). One way that school counselors can build protective factors in these children is by helping them develop cognitions and coping styles linked to increased adjustment following divorce.

Two relevant protective factors to school counselors are parenting practices and access to therapeutic interventions. Authoritative parenting plays a particularly salient role in the protective function for children in families experiencing parental divorce and is associated with positive outcomes in children (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1993; Hetherington et al., 1992; Hetherington et al., 1999; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Simons & Associates, 1996). School counselors should consider the empirical evidence regarding these protective factors and how they can shape the way we work with this population in schools.

### Evidence-Based Practices in School Settings

Evidence-based practice is a movement within psychology and education to identify, disseminate, and promote the use of practices with demonstrated empirical support (Kratochwill, 2007). One of the most cited definitions of evidence-based practice is "conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual [clients]" (Sackett, Rosenburg, Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996, p. 71). As school counseling programs continue to evolve, it is imperative that evidence-based services are provided (Schaeffer et al., 2005). Competent school counselors are cognizant of the research on interventions for specific



problems. This enables them to use the most effective interventions to address certain populations within their comprehensive school counseling programs (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007). A critical challenge for counselors is strengthening the connection between science and practice to increase the likelihood that the empirically-validated interventions will help students most in need (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Using evidence-based interventions is an essential aspect of school counseling programs.

### *Rationale for Evidence-Based Practice in School Counseling*

Evidence-based school counseling is the intentional use of the most empirically supported evidence in planning, implementing, and evaluating school counseling interventions and programs (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). The use of evidence-based practices in school counseling requires professionals to learn more about their students and interventions and how to evaluate and improve their program (Meier & Comer, 2005). School counselors cannot be certain that student outcomes in career, emotional, and academic domains are improving efficiently without clear links to best practice. Counselors should use research to help ensure that professional activities reflect what is known about effective practices and interventions (Carey & Dimmitt, 2008).

School counselors must examine factors that support the use of evidence-based practices. Dimmitt et al. (2007) have developed a model of evidence-based school counseling proposing that counselors (a) use data to identify a problem, (b) find effective interventions, and (c) determine whether the implemented interventions were effective. Building a school counseling program upon this evidence-based model will

help ensure that the most significant problems in a school are being addressed with the best possible interventions (Carey & Dimmitt, 2008). According to this model, counselors should strive to find evidence-based interventions to address the needs of their students (Poynton & Carey, 2006). Reviews demonstrate the effectiveness of evidence-based efforts in promoting youth mental health and academic achievement, thereby supporting two primary goals in school counseling programs (Durlak & Wells, 1997, 1998; Domitrovich & Greenburg, 2000; Hoagwood et al., 2007; Weisz et al., 2005).

Another model that supports the use of evidence-based practices in the school counseling profession is the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (American School Counselor Association, 2003). It is as an all-encompassing, programmatic, organizational, and systematic tool that links school counseling programs to the academic missions of schools (Dimmitt et al., 2007). This model poses an essential question linked to evidence-based practice and accountability, “How are students different because of what school counselors do?” (American School Counselor Association, 2003, p. 1). School counselors can be successful agents of change within their school by using evidence-based practices. Successful implementation of this model advocates that school counselors maintain a range of data skills, including identifying current research-based practices and interventions (Dimmitt et al.).

#### *Why Use Evidence-Based Practices with Children of Divorce?*

There are several reasons for school counselors to use evidence-based practices with children of divorce. Evidence-based programs for these children should

be provided in institutions such as schools because there is immediate access to divorcing families (Cookston, Sandler, Braver, & Genalo, 2007; Greene et al., 2006; Haine, Sandler, Wolchik, Tein, Dawson-McClure, 2003). School is a familiar setting for children and can provide them with a natural support network of classmates and teachers (Cowen, Hightower, Pedro-Carroll, & Work, 1989; Grych & Fincham, 1992). For many children, school is the only environment where they can receive interventions to address their emotional needs (Hoagwood, Burns, Kiser, Ringeisen, & Schoenwald, 2001). Schools are places where evidence-based practices should be utilized to address the needs of all children of divorce. School-based interventions that focus on developing effective coping styles, clarifying misconceptions, developing realistic appraisals of control, and providing accurate attributions for parental problems have been shown to be associated with better adjustment in school (Alpert-Gillis, Pedro-Carroll, & Cowen, 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1997; Pedro-Carroll, Alpert-Gillis, & Cowen, 1992; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1999; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). According to the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (2003), school counselors need to ensure that they are addressing children's needs with a best practices mindset.

### Interventions for Children of Divorce

#### *Consultation with Teachers and Caretakers*

Consultation is an integral component of a school counselor's comprehensive, developmental program (Clemens, 2007). It is identified by ASCA (2003) as a role required in both responsive services and system support. Consultation can also serve as a preventative measure. Specifically, teachers may gain more effective skills or knowledge to respond to and potentially prevent similar situations in the future (Parsons

& Kahn, 2005). An important component in consultation is the use of interventions and instructional methods with a focus on evidence-based practices (Jitendra et al., 2007). There is a growing body of research documenting consultation's effectiveness in reducing externalizing behaviors and improving academic outcomes (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990; Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996; Williford & Shelton, 2008). Since the risk for externalizing behaviors and academic issues is greater for children of divorce (Amato, 2001; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003), consultation can help school counselors aid teachers in preventing and addressing possible issues related to children's adjustment to parental divorce. In-service training for teachers is another way to help them understand issues related to divorce (Goldman & Beuthin, 1997; Lamden et al., 2002).

Although there is promising evidence supporting the effectiveness of consultation, there are methodological issues in many of the studies. Consultation research is difficult to conduct and as a result, studies are usually conceptually and methodologically flawed (Erchul & Martens, 2002). With respect to published outcome studies, there seems to be a lack of empirically sound and externally valid studies (Sheridan, Welch, et al., 1996). Methodological issues such as small sample case study design, limited ability to replicate findings, and questions of treatment integrity affect the level of rigor in consultation studies (Guli, 2005; Wilkinson, 2005).

Guli's (2005) review of 18 parent consultation studies targeting academic, social, emotional, and behavioral concerns yielded moderate to large treatment effects. A significant finding revealed conjoint behavioral consultation including parents and teachers was more effective in producing positive changes than other forms of

behavioral consultation. Based on these findings, school counselors can best address the needs of children of divorce by attempting to work with both parents and teachers collaboratively. In addition, parent education groups provide parents with empirically informed information on the effects of separation and divorce on children (Lee & Hunsley, 2001). There is empirical support for the cognitive-behavioral New Beginnings parent group designed to help reduce mental health problems and promote competencies following divorce (Wolchik et al., 1993; Wolchik et al., 2000). Randomized, experimental trial and replication studies of the New Beginnings Program showed positive program effects on (a) mother-child relationship quality, (b) divorce stressors, (c) discipline, (d) father-child relationship, and (e) children's mental health outcomes (Wolchik et al., 2002; Wolchik, Sandler, Weiss, & Winslow, 2007).

#### *Children of Divorce Intervention Program*

Reviews of studies on the effectiveness of group-based programs for children of divorce have concluded that some psychological interventions can lead to significant improvements in children's functioning across academic and social domains (Grych & Fincham, 1992; Lee, Picard, & Blain, 1994; O'Halloran & Carr, 2000). Though many school counselors facilitate groups with children, there is little empirical evidence showing efficacy for some programs that are used in schools and mental health clinics (Blaisure & Geasler, 2006; Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007; Grych & Fincham, 1992). Reviews of studies on intervention programs with children of divorce are frequently tainted with methodological problems. Few employ random assignment and many only include short-term assessment that limits the value of the effectiveness in a preventative intervention (Emery, Kitzmann, & Waldron, 1999; Grych & Fincham, 1992; Lee et al.).

Two exceptions include Pedro-Carroll's Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP) and Stolberg's Children's Support Group. They have each undergone replication studies and have been subjected to empirical evaluation (Emery et al., 1999; Greene et al., 2006; Haine et al., 2003). CODIP provides the most empirical support for its efficacy (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Emery et al.; Grych & Fincham; Mensah & Fine, 2008; Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1997; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1986; Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005).

CODIP is a selective preventative school-based intervention based on factors linked in research with risk and resilience in children's postdivorce adjustment (Pedro-Carroll, 2001). The program's two main goals are (a) to reduce the stress of parental divorce by providing a supportive environment, and (b) to build skills that can help children cope with the various challenges related to parental divorce (Pedro-Carroll, 2008). CODIP focuses on children's own responses to divorce by providing them with emotional support and teaching cognitive-behavioral coping and internal control skills. These two sources of resilience are empirically related to postdivorce adjustment (Haine et al., 2003; Kim et al., 1997; Sandler, Tein, et al., 2000). The design of CODIP is linked with individual factors related to the quality of children's adjustment to divorce. The program is shaped to develop effective and active coping styles including problem solving and positive thinking. It also focuses on clarifying misconceptions, framing realistic appraisal of control, and providing accurate attributions for parental problems. These skills have been shown to support better adjustment in school-aged children (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1997; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992;

Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1999; Sandler et al., 1994; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994).

*Structure.* Based on the research, four program manuals have been developed for children of different ages: kindergarten and first grade, second and third grades, fourth through sixth grades, and seventh and eighth grades (Pedro-Carroll, 1994; Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1993; Pedro-Carroll, Alpert-Gillis, & Sterling, 1997; Pedro-Carroll, Sutton, & Black, 1999). All CODIP programs utilize a group model. The group structure and content of the program are based on the developmental characteristics of each age group (Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005).

*Empirical support: What makes CODIP evidence-based?* The initial evaluation of the CODIP (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) included 75 fourth through sixth graders from four suburban schools who were randomly assigned to either an immediate 12-week intervention or a delayed intervention control group. Efficacy of the program on the children's adjustment was assessed from four perspectives: parents, teachers, group leaders, and the children (Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005). Specifically, children in the program were judged by teachers to have shown reductions in shy-anxious behaviors and learning issues, and improvements in peer sociability, frustration tolerance, compliance with rules, and adaptive assertiveness. Parents' and group leaders' ratings supported teacher findings, and in addition noted significant decreases in feelings of self-blame about the divorce and increases in competencies such as the ability to solve personal problems. Children who participated in CODIP also reported significantly less anxiety than the control group (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen). A replication study including different group leaders and schools supported these initial findings

(Pedro-Carroll et al., 1986).

Three additional quasi-experimental trials of CODIP have shown significant positive program effects on internalizing and externalizing problems, competence, and adjustment compared with nonrandomized control groups (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1997; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992). Adaptations of CODIP for second and third grade children and for fourth through sixth grade urban children were implemented and evaluated. Findings confirmed the improvements in adjustment previously reported for other samples (Alpert-Gillis et al.; Pedro-Carroll et al.). Specifically, in an evaluation of intervention and comparison groups of second and third grade urban children, pre- and post- intervention results indicated that CODIP children reported greater improvements on measures assessing feelings about self and family and coping abilities than children from either divorce or intact comparison groups (Alpert-Gillis et al.). These studies demonstrated that the program could be modified effectively for urban children of various ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005).

*Children's Support Group: Divorce Adjustment Project*

*Structure.* The Children's Support Group (CSG) is a structured 14-week intervention designed to provide emotional support for 7-through 13-year-old children of divorce. A primary focus of the program is to help children cope with divorce-related stressors by building cognitive behavioral skills including: (a) problem solving, (b) anger control, (c) impulse control, (d) communication, and (e) relaxation (Stolberg & Mahler, 1994; Emery, Kitmann, & Waldron, 1999). Many sessions within the CSG are divided into two sections. The first section of the session includes a discussion on a specific



theme (e.g., reconciliation fantasies, self-blame) that is accomplished through the use of cartoon and pictorial stimuli, writing newspaper articles, and games. The second part of several sessions focuses on skill-building through methods of teaching and modeling. Skill-building activities include the rehearsal of skills such as labeling feelings, problem solving, self-control, communication, relaxation techniques, and anger control. For those families in which the parents participate in the affiliated community-based parent group, Single Parents' Support Group, a skills transfer component is included in the CSG (Stolberg & Mahler, 1994).

*Empirical Support.* Similarly to CODIP, CSG's elements providing emotional support and teaching cognitive-behavioral coping and internal control skills, link to sources of resilience that are empirically related to postdivorce adjustment (Haine et al., 2003; Kim et al., 1997; Sandler, Tein, et al., 2000). The initial evaluation of the CSG included eighty-two 7 through 13 year-olds and their custodial mothers (Stolberg & Garrison, 1985). During this initial evaluation, Stolberg and Garrison (1985) describe the CSG as a prevention program intended to enhance prosocial skills and prevent acting out, poor self-concept, and academic failure of children of divorce. The initial quasi-experimental trial of the CSG indicated that children in the CSG treatment group showed significant improvement in self-concept at posttest and a five-month follow-up in comparison with the nonrandomized, no-treatment control group. In addition, at the five-month follow-up, children in the CSG intervention group exhibited greater increases in adaptive social skills as rated by parents on the Child Behavior Checklist. No effects were found for mental health problems. Pedro-Carroll & Cowen's (1985) evaluation demonstrates the replicability of Stolberg & Garrison's (1985) initial findings, as several

modifications in the original CSG program were introduced to help further emphasize emotional support and self-expression (Stolberg & Garrison, 1985).

A more recent experimental trial with 103 children between ages 8 and 12 included additional adjustment measures gauging clinical ranges, teacher reports of child adjustment, and more game-like activities to increase the children's engagement in sessions (Emery & Kitzmann, 1999; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). Broader implications stem from this research, as Stolberg & Mahler (1994) describe CSG as a treatment program, not a prevention program. During the pre-intervention analysis, approximately 45% of the participants in this study displayed behaviors rated as clinically significant and received a clinical diagnosis. The evaluation showed significant reductions for the intervention group in internalizing and externalizing problems and clinically significant levels of mental health problems at post-test and a one-year follow-up compared with no-treatment controls (Stolberg & Mahler, 1994).

#### Implications for Elementary School Counselors

The potential risk and protective factors associated with children of divorce have important implications for their social-emotional adjustment. Consequently, professional school counselors must recognize the importance of addressing the needs of these children by utilizing evidence-based interventions to help support the academic and social success of these students. As ethical professionals, school counselors are obligated to seek out the most effective interventions for the students they serve (American School Counselor Association, 2004, Standard D.1.g.). Counselors must use a standard of care, defined as "a level of care that is consistent with the degree of learning, skill, and ethics ordinarily possessed and expected by reputable counselors

practicing under similar circumstances” (Wheeler & Bertram, 2008, p. 12). Standard of care is shaped through a combination of influences such as education, ethics, state laws, policies, real world practice, and research. Clinical research that identifies “best practices” for presenting issues or concerns is an important aspect of standard of care (Wheeler & Bertram). Standard C.6.e. of the American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics (2005) addresses the need for scientific bases for treatment modalities. This standard emphasizes the importance of using techniques that are grounded in theory and have an empirical foundation. Therefore, ethical professionals should spend time researching and learning interventions that have empirical support to maximize the success for all students.

Parent and teacher involvement are important components in effective school-based interventions with children of divorce (Ludlow & Williams, 2006; Richardson & Rosen, 1999). An important recommendation for school counselors utilizing CODIP, CSG or behavioral consultation is to include both parents and teachers in the process. Although CODIP and CSG involves groups for children, involving parents can provide important information through parent needs assessments to help determine students who might benefit the most from participating in this group program (Pedro-Carroll & Alpert-Gillis, 1993). On-going contact with parents is recommended to maintain communication and offer consultation. Since treatment modality should be guided from the nature of the child’s issues, teacher input is extremely valuable in defining the child’s school-related concerns. School-based group programs, such as CODIP, may be more appropriate for problems such as anxiety, depression, or barriers to learning related to divorce adjustment. Externalizing problems may require alternate intervention

approaches such as consultation, individual, and family-based therapy (Greene et al., 2006). Examples of teacher involvement include rating children's behavior and achievement, recommending which children should be considered for interventions, and providing additional support (Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). When utilizing consultation to help address externalizing behaviors, it is important to work collaboratively with parents and teachers to be most effective in promoting positive change (Guli, 2005).

Another recommendation for school counselors focuses on the issue of fidelity. Fidelity of treatment can be defined as "the degree to which the treatment as written (described and prescribed in the written treatment manual) was indeed the treatment that was actually provided to (and received by) the [client]" (Kendall & Beidas, 2007, p. 15). Once school counselors have increased awareness of the evidence-based practices that can be utilized with children of divorce, the question that must be asked is, "Can the intervention be implemented with fidelity in our school?" (Dimmitt et al., 2007, p. 70). A critical issue in demonstrating program effects is implementation fidelity (Dimmitt et al.; Haine et al., 2003; Hoagwood et al., 2007; Poynton & Carey, 2006). School counselors need to carefully evaluate whether fidelity can be accomplished. Without fidelity, there is little assurance that comparable outcomes will be achieved (Dimmitt et al.). The intervention plan should be regularly monitored, with the evaluation plan being agreed upon before intervention implementation begins (Zins & Erchul, 2002). This approach ensures treatment integrity of interventions implemented during consultation.

School counselors are experiencing increased demands with regard to accountability. Consequently, counselors are being required to demonstrate that what they are doing is making a difference for all students (Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Although evidence-based practices are supported by sound empirical research, there is no assurance that they will have the desired effect in each setting and circumstance. Thus, it is important to evaluate the effects of each intervention within its context (Carey & Dimmitt, 2008; Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2003). Evaluation of effectiveness is an essential component of behavioral consultation. Documentation can show an increase in desired performance indicators, such as on-task attending behaviors and academic performance. Decreases in undesirable externalizing behaviors, such as aggression or noncompliance, can also be used to show the effectiveness of consultation. It is also necessary to assess the efficacy of group interventions by gathering data from group members, teachers, and parents to demonstrate how participants have changed as a result of their participation (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007; Studer, Oberman, & Womack, 2006).

The school as a system is confronted with large numbers of families coping with transitions created by divorce (Lamden et al., 2002). As a result, strategies for intervention should be designed to address not only the needs of individual students, but also those of the classroom teacher, parents, and the school. This comprehensive model of prevention also emphasizes the developmental implications associated with children of divorce. For example, with young children such as preschoolers, it is recommended that interventions focus on helping parents communicate more effectively with children and stabilizing the care-taking situation. In addition, an essential

component of consultation with teachers regarding children of divorce is ensuring they are aware of common age-specific reactions to divorce. This developmental awareness can help teachers and parents better understand children's behavior and shape behavioral interventions designed to address their needs.

Although there can be many challenges faced by school counselors when considering using evidence-based practices with children of divorce, it needs to be remembered that long-term issues with children of divorce are not inevitable (Pedro-Carroll, 2005). In summary, many children are resilient and will not face serious difficulties when their parents divorce, but school counselors must consider those children that are at risk for difficulties and what they can do to best serve the children in their schools.

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### Biographical Statements

Marianne Connolly, M.Ed., M.A., NCC, is an elementary school counselor at Saints Peter and Paul Elementary School in Easton, MD. Her counseling-related interests include learning differences, grief in children, and children of divorce. She is currently enrolled in the post-master's program in play therapy at Johns Hopkins University to gain expertise in utilizing play as an integral component in her developmental elementary school counseling program.

Eric Green, PhD, LCPC, RPT-S, is an associate professor and associate chair of the Clinical Counseling Program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in Chicago, IL. His school counseling expertise includes being a former elementary school counselor in Louisiana, coordinating the School Counseling Program in the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, and maintaining certification as a school counselor (La.). His scholarly work and research interests focus on traumatized children, elementary school counseling, and play therapy. He regularly conducts trainings and consultations for school counselors in the DC Metro area on the Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative and implementing the ASCA National Model, including Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland. He has taught the graduate course "Internship in School Counseling" and predominantly advised and mentored school counseling graduate students for the past four consecutive years.