REPORT OF A COUNSELLING INTERNSHIP AT ST. MATTHEW'S SCHOOL, ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND INCLUDING A RESEARCH PROJECT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A DIVORCE PROGRAM ENTITLED, WHEN MOM AND DAD SEPARATE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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Report of a Counselling Internship at St. Matthew's School, St. John's, Newfoundland Including a Research Project, Implementation and Evaluation of a Divorce Program entitled, <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u>.

By

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An Internship report submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

This internship component of the Masters of Education (School Psychology) degree program at Memorial University was completed at St. Matthew's School, Cowan Heights, St. John's, Newfoundland. This report has two parts: (1) a placement component and (2) a research component. Outlined in the placement component are: (a) the goals and objectives for the internship and (b) a detailed listing of the activities and learning experiences of the intern. In this placement the intern engaged in individual counselling, group counselling, psycheducational testing, case conferencing and a number of other professionally related activities. The research component involved the delivery of a divorce program, <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u> (Heegard, 1992), to six students at the primary level. A description of the program used and an assessment of its impact and feasibility is offered.

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PART 1

INTERNSHIP COMPONENT

INTRODUCTION

Memorial University of Newfoundland offers a number of optional routes to candidates completing the Master of Education programs. The options are a thesis, project, paper folio or an internship. The internship in the area of counselling provides the opportunity for the candidate to further develop counselling skills while participating in a supervised professional environment. The internship route also allows the intern to develop his or her research skills at the worksite by completing a study designed in collaboration with both his or her faculty and on-site supervisor.

The Faculty of Education has set a number of guidelines to ensure the appropriateness of the internship. It is required that the internship:

- 1. Commence only after satisfactory performance is achieved in an approved practicum,
- 2. Commence only after successful completion of all course work required for the degree program as defined in the University calendar,
- Be chosen only by candidates who have had little experience in the working milieu which they will enter,
- 4. Be initiated after the candidate has approved by the Faculty of Education, a formal internship proposal. The proposal must include, among other points, a

statement of professional goals and expectations for the internship as well as a description of the research to be completed. Normally the research will reflect the needs of the intern and the setting.

5. Be for a minimum period of ten weeks during which the intern is enrolled full time.

(Regulations Governing the Degree of Master of Education)

This candidate chose the internship route. The primary objective for choosing this route was the intern's wish to gain further practical experience which would enhance her professional growth and development. The internship site was St. Matthew's School, Cowan Heights, St. John's, Newfoundland. This site offered:

- a professional environment where direct supervision was available in individual counselling, group counselling, case conferencing and consultation,
- an opportunity to apply learned theoretical concepts,
- opportunities to interact and confer with members of a multidisciplinary team,
- an opportunity to broaden knowledge about the counselling profession,
- an opportunity to broaden knowledge and competency using a wide range of psychoeducational processes and tools,
- ready access to a professional counsellor.

What follows is a brief description of the setting, supervision, specific goals and activities carried out at the internship site as well as a conclusion and/or commentary on the overall impact and outcomes of the experience. Part two reports on the research completed during the internship.

THE SETTING

ST. MATTHEW'S SCHOOL

St. Matthew's School is located in Cowan Heights, St. John's, Newfoundland and is affiliated with the Avalon East School Board. There are approximately 600 students ranging from grades Kindergarten to six, 25 regular classroom teachers, two music teachers, a resource teacher, a physical education teacher, two and one half special education teaching positions and a guidance counsellor. The students that attend St. Matthew's School live, for the most part, near the school in the Cowan Heights area and come from varied socio-economic background(s). The school is very "home oriented" in that it sends out a weekly communigram/newsletter and encourages parental involvement. Numerous activities offered include a peer tutoring program, a "buddy" reading program, a "smart time" reading program, a chess club and a friendship club for students in the developmental unit.

SUPERVISION

The responsibility for supervision was shared by the Faculty of Education, Memorial University and St. Matthew's School.

At the school, the on-site supervision was conducted by the school guidance counsellor, Mr. Bob Bradbury, B.A., M.Ed. His responsibilities relative to this internship included:

- consulting with the intern and her faculty supervisor during the development of the internship proposal,
- on-going supervision of the interns' counselling activities,
- provision of access to appropriate professional opportunities to ensure a beneficial internship experience,
- meeting with the intern on a regular basis to assess progress and to determine any changes in the internship with regard to meeting the interns' specific goals and objectives,
- meeting with the intern and her faculty advisor midway through the internship period assessing her progress and to adjust, if necessary the direction of the internship and
- providing a summative evaluation for her university supervisor.

The intern met with her on-site supervisor during each week of the internship period. During these meetings, the time was usually spent reviewing and discussing the interns' progress (re: goals) and concerns (re: individual clients). These meetings were both insightful and challenging. It gave the intern the opportunity to develop new skills and evaluate her progress.

The university supervisor was Dr. Gary Jeffery, B.A., M.A.Sc., Ph.D His responsibilities included:

- assisting with preparation of the internship proposal and making decisions associated with the process,
- approving the internship proposal,
- being available for consultation with the intern and the on-site supervisor,
- collaborating and consulting with the intern and the on -site supervisor midway through the internship to assess my progress,
- assisting in design of the study component and
- assisting with preparation of the final internship report.

The intern had a number of meetings with her university supervisor regarding the research project and the final internship report. Dr. Jeffery visited St. Matthew's School about midterm at which time he attended a meeting with the intern and Mr. Bradbury. Issues discussed included goals for the internship and the proposed research project.

SPECIFIC GOALS

Based on broad goals set by the Faculty of Education, a set of specific goals were developed.

The following is a list of specific goals and activities carried out to achieve each goal.

GOAL #1 To gain an understanding and proficiency in the use of a wide variety of assessment techniques and tools.

This was essentially a two part goal; part one focused on gaining a knowledge of various tests and the other part, focused on the utilization of these tests with actual clients. This goal was accomplished through a variety of activities including: (a) researching and reading in the area of psychoeducational assessment and (b) using a variety of assessment tools. Tests were administered to a variety of students who were having difficulties in learning. A more detailed knowledge of testing was also gained through (c) scoring tests and interpreting test scores and (d) writing psychoeducational assessment reports.

For a complete listing of type and frequency of tests administered, see Appendix H.

GOAL #2 To enhance and improve individual and group counselling skills.

This goal was accomplished through the following activities: (a) extensive reading in the area of counselling theories and techniques and (b) individual counselling sessions with seven clients. The individual counselling sessions focused on personal and social issues such as the separation of parents, sexual abuse, family conflict, assertiveness and death of a parent. A total of sixty hours was spent in individual counselling sessions with these clients. The intern's counselling skills were also enhanced by (c) group counselling sessions with six clients who were going through divorce. A total of sixteen hours involved group counselling sessions. The intern was facilitator of a separation/divorce program entitled - <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u> by Marge Eaton Heegard (1992). This program is focused in Part Two. Additional counselling skills were gained through (d) reviewing and analysing each individual counselling session with the on-site supervisor and (e) observing the on-site supervisor during six counselling sessions.

Through the intern's experiences, she was able to better recognize and develop her own counselling strengths and weaknesses. Some areas identified as strengths were: developing rapport, listening skills, providing positive feedback, being patient and empathic. Some areas of weakness were: feeling inadequate, fearing lack of knowledge and fearing silence. These latter skills were addressed during the internship.

GOAL #3 To further develop consultation skills.

This goal was accomplished through: (a) observation of the approach and techniques utilized by the on - site supervisor, (b) meetings with parents in which their child's academic and social development was discussed, (c) interviewing students, parents and teachers, (d) participating in case conferences with professionals (such as a behaviour modification therapist, social worker, speech language pathologist and the learning disabilities itinerant teacher), (e) consulting about each case with the on-site supervisor and other professionals before, during and following each psychoeducational assessment, (f) participating in school Program Planning Team meetings with involved parents, administrators, teachers and other professionals and (g) networking with peers, colleagues and supervisors to discuss experiences.

This intern had the opportunity to participate in six case conferences. This exposure made the intern more aware of the multidisciplinary approach that is necessary to meet the needs of the students. This intern gave input regarding an explanation of assessment results and decisions for future educational placement in each of these meetings.

GOAL #4 To become more familiar with the skill and protocol for working effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team.

This goal was accomplished through a variety of activities which involved: (a) following through on referrals for psychoeducational assessment from the Janeway Child

Health Center, (b) consulting with social services, re: advocating for funding for a variety of student needs such as a summer reading program, a recreational program, a summer tutor and transportation costs to and from appointments at the Janeway Child Health Center, (c) consulting with teachers, parents, administrators, the learning disabilities teacher, the speech pathologist and educational psychologist and (d) presenting psychoeducational assessment reports to parents and other members of the multidisciplinary team.

GOAL #5 To help organize and implement an in-service workshop.

This goal was accomplished through helping to organize and implement a drug awareness workshop for the parents of the children at St. Matthew's School. This workshop was coordinated by Mary Beth Doyle from Community Health with input and involvement from the intern and her on-site supervisor. The workshop was held over two nightly sessions with presentation by all three organizers. This intern was responsible for a section on self esteem. The presentation included a definition of self esteem, a listing of indicators of low and high self esteem and giving suggestions for enhancing self esteem. This portion of the workshop was presented in a lecture type format augmented by visual overhead projections. The intern also developed a handout for the parents encapsulating her portion of the workshop.

GOAL #6 To attend in-service education which would enhance professional growth.

This goal was accomplished through attending several in-service education sessions sponsored by St. Matthew's School, the Avalon East School Board and the School Counsellors Association of Newfoundland.

The in-service experiences included: (a) a writing workshop that was held at the school on May 6, 1998. This was part of an ongoing in-service facilitated by Elizabeth Strong from the Faculty of education at Memorial University. The focus of this particular session was for the teachers to come to a general consensus on "What is writing for our school?" This session was attended by all teachers and administrators. The intern also attended an in-service (b) on May 7, 1998 which focused on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Third Edition. The guest speaker was a visiting professor from the University of Saskatchewan. (c) A session on May 28, 1998 designed to educate counsellors on the services available to post secondary students with special needs was also attended. For this session the guest speakers were counsellors from The Glenn Roy Blundon Center at Memorial University and from the College of the North Atlantic.

GOAL #7 To become familiar with the role of a school guidance program.

This goal was essentially a two part goal because it involved learning about the administrative role as well as the program delivery role of the school guidance counsellor.

This goal was accomplished through: (a) observing the on - site supervisor, (b) reviewing files, (c) reviewing protocol and guidance guidelines, (d) accepting responsibilities for various guidance related activities, (eg. classroom observation of several students, one on one supervision of a student with behavioural problems and the administration of abilities tests to several students as per a request from the classroom teachers), (e) meeting with the guidance counsellor of the junior high feeder school to discuss guidance files of the incoming grade six students and (f) attending a Guidance Advisory Committee meeting. This meeting involved input from the guidance counsellor and administration. Each student on the guidance caseload was discussed on an individual basis with regard to progress and future plans. The intern also (g) attended a Guidance Cluster meeting at which all guidance counsellors with the Avalon East School Board are clustered according to geographical area. This meeting was attended by five guidance counsellors and an educational psychologist from the school board. Topics discussed included: diagnosis of students with learning disabilities, sharing resource materials, discussion of the new criteria E, F and G and the protocol to follow to have students placed in these categories so that they could receive the appropriate available educational services. The intern was also involved in (h) the delivery of The Second Step Program (an anti - violence school based program) to approximately 25 - 30, grade five students. This involved eight, thirty five minute lessons which involved such topics as stealing, cheating and gossiping. These lessons involved some role play activities but mainly focused on using a problem solving model.

Goal #8 To conduct a research study.

This goal was achieved through the implementation and evaluation of the impact of the separation/divorce program - <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u> - to six students at St. Matthew's School.

When Mom and Dad Separate is part of a larger program developed by Marge Eaton Heegard (1992) entitled <u>The Drawing Out Feelings Series</u>. This component was created to help children ages six to twelve learn about divorce and to help them recognize and express feelings of grief resulting from family change. This component helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce and allows them to work through the powerful and confusing feelings associated with their parents' decision to separate. The workbook based component used in this study utilizes art, text and group discussion to help children understand and express difficult feelings commonly associated with separation and divorce (eg., feelings of loss and change). This study found that all participants found the program helpful with regard to expressing feelings of grief relative to family change.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The intern was involved in many other guidance related activities during the internship period of April to June, 1998. These other activities included: (a) making and receiving case related phone calls, (b) making case notes and filing, (c) writing letters and

sending case related faxes and (d) reviewing cumulative and guidance files.

Much of the intern's time was invested in researching and reading the professional literature related to the research project. Other readings evolved around counselling issues such as self esteem, grief counselling and assertiveness training.

* For a summary account of hours allocated to internship activities, see Table 1.

HOURS ALLOCATED TO INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF HOURS
Individual Counselling	60
Group Counselling	16
Testing	31
Case Conferencing	35
In-Service Education	11
Drug Awareness Workshop	3
Supervision	15
Research	90

TOTAL HOUR ALLOCATED TO INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES = 261 HOURS

CONCLUSION

The actual title of this part has outlined the various activities in which the intern was involved with during her internship at St. Matthew's School. As a result of the many and diverse experiences, the intern feels that she has been successful in achieving her overall aim of enhancing her professional development as a counsellor. The specific goals set out were realized through the various activities engaged in while at the school.

The placement at St. Matthew's School gave the intern the opportunity to work with experienced professionals from various disciplines within the helping profession. Discussions with both supervisors, teachers and other professionals proved to be invaluable. These experiences have helped build counselling skills, increase self confidence as a counsellor and increase the intern's knowledge in the selection, administration, scoring and interpretation of various assessment tools. Completion of the research component also proved to be a great learning experience and added to the interns' skills in that it helped the intern to realize that research requires a very systematic approach and that it has to be carried out a in way that is well planned and organized and follows certain procedural standards.

This intern would highly recommend the internship route to other graduate students in the Educational Psychology Program. The following are recommendations to others who might choose an internship option for the Master of Education Program:

 Take every advantage to interact with the diverse professionals you will have the opportunity to interact with.

- Utilize to the greatest extent possible the various in service opportunities likely to be available during your placement.
- Familiarize yourself with the range of intervention materials and general information likely to be found in your placement's resource centre.
- Maintain detailed activity logs and records needed in the preparation of your final report.
- Take advantage of the wide range of opportunities to further develop your professional and practical skills that will present themselves.
- Plan and organize your goals, placement activities and, if possible, research component, well in advance.

PART 2

RESEARCH COMPONENT

TITLE: An Assessment of the impact of the program, <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u>, in a Primary Setting.

INTRODUCTION

This study was aimed at assessing the impact of the divorce program, When Mom and Dad Separate in a primary setting. This program is part of a larger package developed by Marge Eaton Heegard (1992) entitled <u>The Drawing Out Feelings Series</u> which is aimed at helping children understand and express difficult feelings from loss or change through death, illness or death. The workbook based component used in this study utilizes art, text and group discussion. This particular component was created to help children ages six twelve learn about divorce, to encourage open communication and to help them recognize and express feelings of grief resulting from family change. The component helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce and allows them to work through the often powerful and confusing feelings associated with their parents' decision to separate.

Divorce is deemed to be a major problem for some children and an event which has been found to be having a significant impact on several aspects of a child's personal and academic life (Pedro-Carroll, 1983). While such children often need or could benefit from counselling there is a severe lack of community agencies, including schools that offer any type of support. Teachers and counsellors also recognize the need for such support.

This study involved eight group sessions over a four week period. There were six participants in the program ranging in age from six to eleven years. The aim of this study was first and foremost to offer help to those children identified as experiencing problems relative to their parents' decision to separate. This component of Heegard's package was the only divorce support material available at St. Matthew's School and it had yet to be used by the guidance counsellor. This study sought to assess the appropriateness of these materials and to assess their impact and ease of use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Separation or divorce involves a major life transition for a child that has far reaching social, psychological, personal and parental consequences. Divorce occurs at a staggering rate in our society, affecting some 40 to 60 % of school age children (Thompson & Rudolph, 1992,). Research indicates that some children experience a divorce with relatively few emotional scars. A significant percentage, however, show adjustments and personality difficulties in both the home and school settings (Knoff, 1987). While most children are able to cope with separation and divorce of their parents, "studies uniformly find that divorce is a jolt to most children" (Clapp, 1992, page 92). In the home, divorce has been noted to be related to health problems, decreased coping skills, increased anxiety and aggression and lowered levels of social interactions. School settings can expect to encounter lowered academic functioning, increased emotional adjustment problems, increased retention rates and more frequent interactions with school authorities and mental health professionals (Knoff, 1987).

School age children generally react with some combination of anger, fear, withdrawal, grieving, reconciliation fantasy, shame, loyalty conflicts, sense of loss, confusion and frustrations in response to decisions and events that they cannot control. Children of all ages tend to blame themselves for their parents' separation. They may feel that they caused the break-up of the family because they were not good enough or that their parents are divorcing them. These issues manifest themselves in the school setting through lowered self esteem and increasing behaviour problems that interfere with learning and create tremendous challenges for the school counsellor and other personnel (Lund,

1984). Wallerstein (1984) has found that these effects of parental divorce do not dissipate over time without intervention.

Divorce can be such a painful experience for parents that many are temporarily blinded to the needs of their children at a time when these children need their parents the most. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) made us very aware of the impact of divorce on children, as well as their parents, emphasizing that it can place children at risk for psychological, emotional and intellectual developmental problems.

Research by Lund and Riley (Lund, 1984) looked at childrens' emotional adjustment and educational progress in the context of family relationships and dynamics. They found that : (1) children of ' parents in conflict ' were less well adjusted at school than the children of ' harmonious co-parents ' but better adjusted than the children in the ' absent parent group ' and that (2) children of the ' absent parent group ' were rated by their teachers as having the highest number of emotional problems and the lowest self esteem compared to other groups.

Children need to be reassured that they were not the cause of the problem and that separation and/or divorce is strictly an adult problem. They need reassurance that they had nothing to do with the separation and that their care and love will not stop.

Support groups may be a method of meeting the needs of some of the students at risk from difficult family situations (Costa & Stilner, 1994). The American and British experience of running groups for children whose families are affected by divorce or separation suggests that these groups can be very helpful. Sharing painful feelings and difficulties with other people often makes feelings more manageable. The group may offer solutions to particular problems (Parkinson, 1987). Gwynn and Brantley (1987) presented an Education Support Group Program for nine to eleven year olds whose parents had been separated for a year. This program comprised of eight sessions in which the children were encouraged to talk about divorce, to identify feelings that parents and children share, to share problems regarding parent and sibling conflicts and to use problem solving techniques based on the authors' "Talking, Feeling and Doing" game. Gwynn and Brantley evaluated their intervention group by comparing children in the intervention group with children paired in a non-treatment control group. Children in the intervention group showed greater decreases in depression, anxiety and negative feelings about divorce and a greater knowledge of divorce information than children in the control group.

Kalter, Pickar and Lesowitz (1984) described a school based program for fifth and sixth graders in which the children meet at school for one hour per week for eight weeks. Several common themes were addressed including : anxiety over parental battles, conflict over loyalties, sadness over loss of the original family and less contact with the father. Kalter et al. evaluated their intervention program using parent reports, child questionnaires and pre/post test comparisons on various scales and tests. They found a reduction in children's wishes for conciliation, a reduction in feelings of confusion about divorce and a reduction in feelings that the divorce was their fault.

Stolberg and Cullen (1983) developed a primary prevention program for children from eight to thirteen years of age. <u>The Children's Support Group</u> was a school based educational program designed to help children with a supportive group exercise. The intervention involved twelve weekly, one hour sessions. Discussion, modelling and role playing were used to teach new ways of handling divorce related situations. Pedro-Carroll (1983, Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) evaluated the effectiveness of <u>The Children's</u> <u>Support Group</u> school based intervention program. Extensive evaluation of materials was carried out. She found that teachers reported positive changes in adjustment for children, reductions in moody, anxious behaviour and fewer learning problems. This research clearly documents that children are able to report feeling better following the group interventions utilized in this program.

While there are many published programs which can be individualized to meet the needs of children of divorce, only those that were used in schools or readily adapted to inschool use are focused upon. Persons or readers interested in other programs which have been researched might study: (1) <u>HELPING Children of Divorce Program</u>, (Green, 1978), (2) <u>The Children of Family Change Program</u>, (Holdahl & Caspersen, 1977), and (3) <u>A</u> <u>Group Design to Help Children to Adjust to Parental Divorce</u>, (Bonkowski, Bequette and Boomhower, 1984).

The program used in this study is based on a text, <u>When Mom and Dad</u> <u>Separate : Children Can Learn To Cope With Grief From Divorce</u>, written by Marge Eaton Heegard (1992). This component is part of a larger work entitled <u>The Drawing Out</u> <u>Feelings</u> which was created to help children understand and express difficult feelings from loss and change. The package includes a facilitator's guide which offers information and directions for each component as well as a format for delivery of each session. This component was created to help children ages six to twelve learn about divorce and the feelings of grief that they may experience. This workbook based program helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce and is thereby intended to help them work through the powerful and confusing feelings often resulting from their parents' decision to separate.

Major concepts about divorce are presented in six units which the author recommends should be followed in order. These concepts include : (1) change is part of life, (2) understanding divorce, (3) feelings about divorce, (4) expressing feelings, (5) living with divorced parents and (6) living well in a changing world.

The content included in the program may be augmented by using additional material suggested by Heegard (1992). The facilitator may read samples of this material and thereby encourage discussion. The basic program asks the children to draw, in workbooks, any pictures that come into mind when they read the words on the page. They may ask the facilitator for more directions or suggestions but are encouraged to make their own decisions and draw based on their own ideas. The emphasis is on their own ideas and feelings rather than drawing ability.

This program was originally chosen by the guidance counsellor at the target school. It has face validity when compared with other school based intervention programs used for children experiencing separation and/or divorce therefore it was deemed acceptable. The aforementioned program contains many elements common with others that have been researched. Those commonalities include:

- (1) understanding and appropriately expressing feelings related to family changes,
- (2) giving a realistic awareness of the family situation,
- (3) listening to and understanding the feelings of others in similar situations,
- (4) developing strategies for adjusting to family change,
- (5) giving and accepting support,

- (6) understanding loss and separation,
- (7) enhancing self esteem,
- using similar materials such as books about conflict, family relationships and divorce,
- (9) the use of art and drawings.

The author, Marge Eaton Heegard, is a Licenced Clinical Social Worker, Registered Art Therapist and Certified Grief Counsellor in Minneapolis, MN. She has been a leader in developing a series of materials for adults and children using workbook based activities. These materials all aim at helping people to express feelings of grief. The divorce component is part of the overall series called Drawing Out Feelings. In a search of the literature and through contact with Heegard and her publisher Woodland Press it was ascertained that although the series has not been researched, it is very popular in the United States and is widely used by private counsellors and school counsellors.

METHODOLOGY

This section offers a description of the program, delivery format used in the study, the study sample, data gathering and analyses used.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

"When Mom and Dad Separate", is part of a series of materials entitled: <u>Drawing</u> <u>out Feelings</u> written by Marge Eaton Heegard (1992). This component was created to help children ages six - twelve learn about divorce and the feelings of grief. This component uses art, text and group discussion. This workbook based program helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce, allowing them to work through the often powerful and confusing feelings associated with their parents' decision to separate.

The component used includes a facilitator's guide which outlines each session. The published program suggests that major concepts about divorce be presented in six sessions and that users follow the order recommended by the author. Each session is to be concept oriented. The concepts to be addressed include: (1) "change is part of life", (2) "understanding divorce", (3) "feelings about divorce", (4) "expressing feelings", (5) "living with divorced parents" and (6) "living well in a changing world."

DELIVERY FORMAT USED IN THE STUDY

In the delivery of the program the concepts included in the facilitator guide were stressed by using additional reading (for a listing of the suggested additional reading for children see Appendix E) from those that are suggested by Heegard (1992). A typical session involved reading by the facilitator and group discussion. Following this the children were asked to draw in their workbooks and draw any pictures that came into mind when they read the words on the page. If they asked for more directions or suggestions, they were encouraged to make their own decisions and draw their own ideas. The emphasis was on ideas and expressions rather than drawing ability.

The program was offered in eight not the recommended six, fifty minute sessions. Session number one served as an introduction to the program and for administration of the pre-test and session number eight served as closure to the program and for administration of the post-test. The other six sessions were concept based sessions as suggested by Heegard (1992).

Prior to delivery of the program parents were contacted by mail and a description of the program was sent (see Appendix B for a copy of this letter). Parents were asked to give their permission for their child's participation in the program. During the program anecdotal notes were logged after each session. After program delivery, the post-test was administered, student interviews were conducted, workbooks were analyzed by a professional other than the author and workbooks were returned to the students.

To ensure the confidentiality of those in the program, participants were not identified by name but for the purposes of this report each participant was assigned a number. Each participant was referred by this number only. This research study was conducted in an ethical manner in accordance with accepted standards of ethical behaviour.

SAMPLE

The sample for this study was generated through a classroom teacher survey (for a copy of this survey see Appendix A) in which the teachers were asked to identify children whose parents had made them aware of a recent separation and/or divorce. From the teachers' perspectives those children that were identified were displaying behaviour and academic problems. Teachers report that from the perspective of some of the parents, these problems seem to have manifested themselves since separation or divorce. The names of twenty six students were put forward. From these twenty six names, the parents of twelve students, whose parents had on more than one occasion made requests for some type of service were sent a letter asking if they would allow their children to participate in the study. Nine families were sent a letter explaining the program and requesting them to return an enclosed form indicating their consent for the child's participation. The first six children whose parents returned the requested consent formed the study sample. In total there were four families involved, three children were from the same family. The children ranged in age from six to ten years. There were three males and three females. All participants attended all eight sessions.

ANALYSIS USED

The evaluation of impact of this study involved:

(1) Pre-post test design. The same test was used in the data gathering carried out pre and post the delivery of the program. (For a copy of the pre/post test see Appendices D and F). The purpose of the test was to determine if the information changed as a function of the program. The information in the test was based on the major concepts about divorce presented in the six sessions. The pre/post test had the participants identifying which one of two given statements is true (the pre-test results were not viewed until the post-test had been given). The pre/post test answers were compared for similarities.

- (2) Involvement was assessed by rating the children's workbooks. Workbooks were rated based on a quantity, richness, focus and commentary dimension. (see Appendix G for a copy of the involvement rating) The workbook analysis was done independently by a qualified guidance counsellor. Each of the three categories were rated on a scale of one to five, five meaning a high rating and one meaning a low rating. The quantity dimension was judged by the amount of drawing that was done in the workbook, the richness dimension was judged by the integration of multiple themes and the focus dimension was judged by on task drawing.
- (3) Student Interviews (See Appendix I for a copy of the interview questions). These interviews were all structured, done individually and lasted from ten to fifteen minutes. The interview results were analyzed by a professional guidance counsellor to identify similar themes. All participants were asked the same questions.
- (4) Anecdotal Sessional Notes These notes were collected during and written following each session by the facilitator. Individual comments were used as a basis for identifying themes and/or issues recorded by the author. Some

generalizations have been made regarding the individual comments of all the participants.

RESULTS

(1) Pre/Post Test Outcomes - It was found that five of the six participants in the program scored each item the same on the pre/post test. One participant (also the youngest in the group) changed two items from pre-test to post-test. Initially, the following statements, "There are things I could have done to save my Mom and Dad's marriage" and "There is a good chance my Mom and Dad will get back together", were marked as being true. On the post-test these items were changed to reflect an opposite view.

(2) Workbook Analysis

The involvement ratings for each participant are provided below in Table 2.

TABLE 2 - Involvement - Ratings of Children's Work from the Workbook

PARTICIPANT	QUANT.	RICHNESS	FOCUS	COMMENTARY
#1	4	4	5	Contained drawings and written comments
#2	5	5	5	Good comments relative to home situations and very colourful drawings
#3	4	4	5	Less commentary, more drawing
#4	4	3	3	Less focused
#5	2	3	3	Less focused drawing
#6	4	4	4	More drawing, not too much commentary

There was a narrow range of ratings within subjects, all tended to be rated within two points. The findings from the workbook analysis suggest that participants number one, two and three had drawings on all pages, integrated themes and were highly focused, participants number four, and six had not drawn on all pages or offered integrated themes. They appeared to be not as focused. Participant number five did very little drawing, integrated themes only slightly and was less focused than the others.

(3) ANECDOTAL NOTES

When anecdotal notes were analyzed, the following points were noted:

all participants came to the program with information from their parents as to why they were attending, all participants stated that they believed people get married because they love each other, all participants drew "divorce" with two houses or a line separating two houses, all wished that their parents would get back together, all participants agreed that their parents still fight about custody and money. all participants except number six do not want their parents involved with other people, all participants explained divorce by writing that their parents did not love each other but all still wondered if their parents still loved each other.

Several individual comments were also offered. It was noted that: participant number one was enthusiastic stating that he never had a chance before to talk about things that bothered him about his parent's divorce. He liked when his Dad bought roses for his Mom because "they wouldn't fight". Participant number two was very involved in the program and enjoyed telling lots of stories about her dad's new partner. Participant number three informed that he did not want to come to the program but his Mom told him he had to. As the program progressed, he commented that it was helpful to express his feelings and he liked coming to the group. He was also very vocal, and he wrote extensively in the workbook. He stated that he has accepted the role of man of the house and stated that he felt responsible for caring for his younger brother and sister. He wished that he could divide himself so his Mom and Dad would not have to fight over him. Participant number four was frequently trying to change to more safe topics such as her dog or her hamster. She is not happy that her Dad has a new girlfriend. Participant number five was less focused and was often off task colouring. His drawing was sometimes unrelated to the areas of discussion. He was in grade one and had some trouble reading the words on the pages in the workbook and sometimes had to wait for help before getting started. Participant six stated that she was accepting of her family situation now that her Dad had a new friend.

(4) STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Student interviews were structured and all answered the same questions. All participants except one indicated that the group was helpful. Statements made included: "it helped to let out feelings", "it was helpful because I am not sad anymore" and "it made me feel comfortable to talk about divorce because I had never talked about it before." All respondents indicated that if they had a friend who experienced a divorce in his or her life and that they would recommend that he or she participate in a similar group because it is helpful. All respondents said that the drawing was the best part of the program because they were able to draw how they were feeling. One participant responded that what she liked least about the program was when others butted in when people are talking.

CONCLUSION

The pilot study was conducted with six students, in a primary setting, ranging in age from six to ten years. The study was intended to assess the appropriateness, ease of use and impact of the program entitled When Mom and Dad Separate, (Heegard, 1992). While it was found that there was no increase in levels of participants' knowledge, as determined by the difference in pre/post test performance, the program, overall was well received by students. There appeared to be a shift in the students' self blaming and notions that their parents would get back together. The participants enjoyed the group activities, the drawing and the freedom to verbally express their feelings about divorce. The workbook analysis along with anecdotal notes from each session suggest that participants' interest in the program rated from very high to high. It was indicated, through their interview statements, that all participants found the program helpful. They expressed a high degree of satisfaction and particularly enjoyed the opportunity for group activities and self expression. All participants indicated that they would recommend the program to other students experiencing separation and/or divorce. It was also found that the program lends itself well to delivery in a primary school setting.

Heegard (1992), in the facilitator guide, recommends that the six fifty minute sessions should be used. This format was deemed unsatisfactory because the fifty minute time frame was found to be insufficient. Heegard also suggests doing the specified activities and using additional reading from those she has suggested in the facilitator guide. Having the group leader read from additional sources during the individual sessions proved to be helpful in that this augmented the ease with which participants understood the six major concepts addressed in the program. This workbook based program requires that in each

session, students also independently do considerable reading. This independent reading was problematic because not all the participants had the reading skills necessary to handle this material. The facilitator guide provided directions as to where each session should begin and end in the workbooks. This proved to be somewhat of a problem because the children worked at different paces. Some were finished before others.

Based on this study, it is recommended that users ensure that there is appropriate physical space that can accommodate the group activities. Workbooks and drawing activities, for example, require that each participant have adequate space. It is also suggested that users ensure that there is sufficient time for group processes and the workbook activities that are essential to meet the objectives of the program. The leader must also make the necessary accommodations for younger participants who have not mastered reading. It would be useful to group together children at the same level of maturity. It is the view of the author that a parallel discussion or support group involve the parents of the participants.

Overall the Heegard program appears to offer a worthwhile resource to primary counsellors faced with the myriad of difficulties often experienced by children coping with their parents' divorces. Before definitive statements as to program potential can be made, considerable additional research needs to be completed.

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APPENDIX LISTING

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APPENDIX A

St. Matthew's School St. John's, NF

All Classroom Teachers:

To complete the research component of my Master's of Education (Educational Psychology) Program, I plan to run a group program for children who have or are experiencing separation and/or divorce. My rationale for conducting this program is based on the premise that while most children are able to cope with the separation and/or divorce of their parents and make good adjustments some children do have difficulty adjusting and may need some professional help. Children are to be offered a program aimed at minimizing the impact of the confusion they are experiencing.

This program will be offered over an eight week period beginning the week of April 20th, 1998 and ending the week of June 8th, 1998 and will include eight - thirty to forty minute sessions.

I am trying to determine a need for this program. If you are aware of any child in your class going through separation and/or divorce who could benefit from this type of program, I would appreciate your help. As this is a sensitive issue for parents and children alike, please identify only those children whose parents have made you aware of a recent separation and/or divorce. The names of participating and potentially participating students will be kept strictly confidential. Parents and children have the right to not be involved. Participating families may withdraw at any time. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or Dr. G. Jeffery or Dr. Linda Phillips at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of NF.

Please return your list of students to the guidance office.

Thank you.

Joan McCue Guidance Practicum Student

APPENDIX B

May 11, 1998

Mrs. T. Davis, Principal St. Matthew's School St. John's, NF

Dear Mrs. Davis:

To complete the research component of my Master's of Education (Educational Psychology) Program, I plan to run and evaluate a group program for children of separation and/or divorce. My rationale for conducting this program is based on the premise that most children are able to cope with the separation and/or divorce of their parents and make good adjustments to their new family but some children do have difficulty adjusting and may need some professional help.

The program will be offered to children identified by their parents or their teachers.

I plan to use components of The Drawing Out Feelings Series - "When Mom and Dad Separate - Children Can Learn to Cope With Grief From Divorce", by Marge Eaton Heegard. I am requesting your permission to run this program. This program is designed using a workbook to help children deal with their feelings about separation and/or divorce. The workbook helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce, allowing them to work through all the powerful and confusing feelings resulting from their parents decision to separate.

All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified in the report. Participation is voluntary and parental consent will be obtained. Parents will be informed that all names and information related to this program will be strictly confidential plus they will be made aware of the fact that they can withdraw their children at any time.

If you are in agreement with having selected students of St. Matthew's School participate in this study, please sign below. This study has the approval of the Faculty of Education Ethics Review Committee. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature, please contact Dr. Gary Jeffery or Dr. Linda Phillips at the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of NF.

Sincerely yours,

Joan McCue

I, (Principal, St. Matthew's School) hereby give permission for selected students at St. Matthew's to take part in a program for children of separation and/or divorce. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that the school, parents and/or students can withdraw permission at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date

Principal

APPENDIX C

May 11, 1998

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Joan McCue and I am a graduate student in Educational Psychology at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University. During April, May and June 1998 I will be completing an internship as a school counsellor at St. Matthew's School. As part of my internship I plan to offer a program aimed at helping children going through the experience of a separation or divorce. It is being offered, in part, because some parents have expressed the wish for such a program. The program will be offered to children identified by their parents or their teachers and delivery of the program has the full cooperation of your school.

The program is designed to help children gain an understanding of family change and to help them learn appropriate ways of expressing their feelings related to family change. A curriculum unit entitled <u>When Mom and Dad Separate</u> - <u>Children Can Learn to Cope</u> with Grief from Divorce by Marge Eaton Heegard will be used. This program uses short stories and a workbook in which the child will do drawings to express their feelings and understanding. The workbook helps children discuss the basic concepts of marriage and divorce and allows them to work through the often powerful and confusing feelings resulting from a separation or divorce.

Children participating will attend six sessions. At the completion of the program there will be an assessment of the program's impact. This assessment will involve a brief interview in which your child will be asked questions about his or her views of the program. You will also be contacted and asked for your views on the program and its impact.

All information gathered is strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified in the report. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your child at anytime.

I am requesting your permission for your child to participate in this program. Your child will also be asked to participate and it will be made clear that he/she can withdraw this permission any time should he/she change their mind.

If you are in agreement with having your child participate in this program, please sign

and return the attached form to St. Matthew's School. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or Mr. Bob Bradbury, the guidance counsellor, at St. Matthew's (745 - 2500).

Please return this consent form as soon as possible. If at any time you wish to speak with my university supervisor, contact Dr. Gary Jeffrey at telephone # 737 - 7654 or a resource person not associated with the program, please contact Dr. Linda Phillips, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 737 - 7626. This study has the approval of the Faculty of Education Ethics Review Committee.

This study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines for research established by Memorial University and report results from the study will be available to you upon request.

Yours Sincerely,

Joan McCue

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Permission to Participate In the Separation/Divorce Program

I,_______ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child,_______ to take part in this study. I understand that participation is strictly voluntary and that my child and/or I can withdraw permission at any time. All information is strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. No individual will be identified in the report.

Signature:

Date: _____19____

APPENDIX D

CHILDREN'S DIVORCE/SEPARATION GROUP

PRE-TEST

NAME

PLEASE INDICATE () WHICH STATEMENT IS TRUE:

() I am the cause of my Mom and Dad's separation and/or divorce.

() I am not the cause of my Mom and Dad's separation and/or divorce.

- () There are things I could have done to save my Mom and Dad's marriage.
- () There is nothing I could have done to save my Mom and Dad's marriage.

() I was angry because my Mom and Dad broke up.

- () I was not angry because my Mom and Dad broke up.
- () There is a good chance my Mom and Dad will get back together.
- () There is no chance that my Mom and Dad will get back together.
- () It is normal to be sad when Mom or Dad moves out.
- () It is not normal to be sad when Mom or Dad moves out.
- () It helps to talk about feelings and to let them show.
- () It does not help to talk about feelings and to let them show.

APPENDIX E

ADDITIONAL READING FOR CHILDREN

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APPENDIX F

CHILDREN'S DIVORCE/SEPARATION GROUP

POST-TEST

NAME

PLEASE INDICATE () WHICH STATEMENT IS TRUE:

() I am the cause of Mom and Dad's separation and/or divorce.

() I am not the cause of Mom and Dad's separation and/or divorce.

- () There are things I could have done to save my Mom and Dad's marriage.
- () There is nothing I could have done to save my Mom and Dad's marriage.
- () I was angry because Mom and Dad broke up.
- () I was not angry because Mom and Dad broke up.
- () There is a good chance that my Mom and Dad will get back together.
- () There is no chance that my Mom and Dad will get back together.
- () It is normal to be sad when Mom or Dad moves out.
- () It is not normal to be sad when Mom or Dad moves out.
- () It helps to talk about feelings and to let them show.
- () It doesn't help to talk about feelings or to let them show.

APPENDIX G

INVOLVEMENT - RATINGS OF CHILDREN'S WORK FROM THE WORKBOOK

NAME	QUANT.	RICHNESS	FOCUS	COMMENTARY

APPENDIX H

TABLE 2

TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF TESTS ADMINISTERED

TYPE OF TEST ADMINISTERED	FREQUENCY (HOURS)	
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Third Edition	4 (10 hours)	
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test	3 (8 hours)	
Standard Reading Test	2 (1 hour)	
Informal Reading Inventories (student interviews)	4 (2 hours)	
Test of Written Language	3 (2 hours)	
Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration	3 (2 hours)	
Brigance Diagnostic Inventories	1 (.5 hours)	
Connors Behaviour Rating Scale	1 (.5 hours)	
Test of Auditory Perceptual Skills	3 (2 hours)	
Test of Visual Perceptual Skills	3 (2 hours)	
Learning Disabilities Checklists	3 (1 hour)	
Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test	5 (9 hours)	

APPENDIX I

POST PROGRAM STUDENT INTERVIEW

- (1) Do you feel that participation in the Separation/Divorce group was helpful to you? Why or why not ?
- (2) What part of the group did you like best?
- (3) What part of the group did you like least?
- (4) If you had a friend who experienced a separation/divorce in his or her life, would you recommend that he or she participate in a similar group ? Why or why not ?
- (5) Did you attend all six group sessions ?

----- Yes ----- No

(6) Comments, suggestions, etc.

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ADDITIONAL READINGS

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