

# Kids dread but accept divorce

Divorce is not an easy situation for any child. But a University of Michigan study indicates that imagining it may be much more traumatic than experiencing it.

In a study of 165 school children from divorced and intact families, Janice M. Hammond, U-M doctoral candidate in education, found that nearly 80 percent of the children in intact households felt divorce would be "bad" or "the worst thing that could ever happen to me."

The children of divorced parents, however, expressed a more positive view. Ten percent asserted that divorce was "a very good thing" and 33 percent more said their lives were "better" as a result.

"The benefit they cited most often was not having their parents fight so much," Ms. Hammond reported. "Other positive effects were receiving more presents, celebrating holidays twice, visiting the non-custodial parent and getting extra attention."

"On the negative side, the children were bothered most by not being able to see one of their parents as often as they liked. Other difficulties included having less money, deciding whom to live with and moving to a new home."

HAMMOND'S doctoral study focused on third through sixth graders at two public elementary schools in an all-white, lower-middle income community near Detroit. Matching the 82 youngsters of divorced or separated parents with 83 from intact households, she examined differences in self-concept, school behaviors and various attitudes toward divorce.

A questionnaire administered to all of the children disclosed no significant differences in self-concept between the

two groups. Moreover, the teachers reported no significant differences in their reading or mathematics achievement," she related.

"The teachers did, however, rate the boys of divorced families much higher in the school behavioral problems of acting out and distractibility than those of intact families. The boys of divorced households also rated themselves and their families as less happy than those in the non-divorced group and expressed more dissatisfaction with the time and attention they received from their parents. The girls in the study showed no significant differences on any of these measures."

"One interesting finding has to do with custody arrangements," she said. "The majority of girls in the divorce group said that they would prefer to live with their mothers — not surprising, since most were doing so."

"But 47 percent of the boys in the divorce group and 63 percent of both sexes in the intact group chose living half the week with one parent and half with the others. None of the 82 families in the study had this arrangement. Yet it may be an alternative worth considering, especially since it was the most frequent choice of the children."

MRS. HAMMOND said her study contradicted two common beliefs about children of divorce — that children often feel responsible for causing the marital break-up and that they tend to believe, if they behave well and ask them to, the parents will go back together.

"The children in this study displayed no such guilt feelings nor any illusions about bringing about a reconciliation. Ninety-six percent stated flatly that they believed their parents would never

marry each other again.

"It should be remembered, however, that these are older children averaging 10 years of age; the length of time since the divorce was an average of 5½ years. Thus, many of them had the time and maturity to be realistic about the situation," Hammond explains, "and make the adjustment."

"Children who have not been through a divorce tend to treat the experience as a catastrophe and imagine it to be far worse than it is. It would seem that children who have accepted their parents' divorce would be an excellent resource to talk with and help those who are about to go through it."

The researcher became sensitive to the effects of divorce on children as an elementary school counselor for eight years. "With the incidence of divorce more than doubling during the past decade, it has been estimated that by 1981, half the children in the United

States will be affected by divorce in some way," she said. "Schools and school counselors are in the most viable position to assist children through this crisis."

She recommends group counseling for children of divorce to share mutual concerns and support, and greater use of individual and group meetings for divorced parents to discuss the needs of their children.

In addition, she says, teachers should conduct classroom discussions on divorce as a means of making all children more knowledgeable and understanding about family separations.

"It is no longer believed that a child from a 'broken home' is destined for failure," she concluded. "But with the population of divorced couples increasing rapidly, it is crucial to develop strategies and programs to help their children make positive adjustments."

## Class Reunions

### LIVONIA BENTLEY 1959

Graduates of the class of 1959 of Bentley High School in Livonia are beginning plans for a 20-year reunion in August at the Plymouth Hilton. Those interested in doing organizational work or attending may call Yvonne Colter, 464-1617.

### DETROIT CHADSEY 1954

The class that graduated from De-

troit Chadsey High School in 1954 will hold a 25-year reunion May 12. Those interested in attending should call Juanita Mason Wells, 342-0334.

### DETROIT CASS TECH

The Cass Technical High School classes of 1933, 1934 and 1935 will hold a reunion Saturday, April 28, at the Polish Century Club. Those interested in attending may call Harold Alexander, 532-6368.

## Disco group tryouts planned

Hoping to organize a dance group that would be known as the Detroit Disco Co., Livonians Linda Dunham and Susan Topolewski are scheduling tryouts for women 18-26 Tuesday evening at Riley Junior High School.

Those interested in being considered for eight openings in the team should call Ms. Dunham at 421-8959 or Ms. Topolewski at 261-7320, between 6 and 7 p.m.



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or black; '55. Right, a bit of AM élan—the new collared shirt, with a thin little string tie; in white or tomato red; '52. These, of polyester georgette, for sizes 4 to 16. Find them in the Blouse Boutique... where we are all the things you are.

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