

Chores in Divorced and Remarried Families:
A Burden or an Opportunity to Contribute?

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Running head: VALUED CONTRIBUTOR OR MORE BURDENED ROLE

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Abstract

Family responsibilities of 12th graders from married ($N = 908$), divorced single-mother ($N = 133$) and stepfather families ($N = 90$) were examined with attention to whether they represented a burden or an opportunity to make a valuable contribution. Adolescents in divorced families reported spending more time on household chores than those in married families and perceived themselves as more valued contributors and more burdened. Divorced families were reported to be less hierarchical than both married and remarried families, and married families were perceived to be more cohesive than divorced or remarried families. In addition to family structure, familial hierarchy, cohesion, and assignment of chores were related to whether adolescents perceived themselves as valued contributors or burdened members. Contributor role was predicted primarily by divorced family status and greater responsibility for chores. Burdened role was predicted by divorced status and more chores, as well as greater hierarchy and lower cohesion.

Key terms: adolescence, chores, divorce, remarriage, cohesion, hierarchy

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Over the past 40 years, the American family has changed considerably, as divorce and remarriage have become common family experiences. The literature on family transitions has focused on the deficit family model, a perspective that assumes that deviations from married status will produce difficulties in adjustment (Barber & Eccles, 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1994). As a result of the deficit family perspective, most of the research has seen divorce and remarriage as a crisis, and has looked for negative outcomes. However, recent meta-analyses and literature reviews have reported that, on average, parental divorce and remarriage have only a small negative impact on the well-being of children (Amato & Keith, 1988; Emery, 1988; Ganong & Coleman, 1984).

The weak associations between family context and developmental outcomes may be related to the research focus on family type rather than processes within families. Focus on family context or family process alone is incomplete. Family structure and processes are correlated. Family structures create opportunities for certain interactions and decrease the likelihood of others (Amato, 1994). Because family types differ in their characteristic processes, they may offer different strengths and weaknesses for certain developmental outcomes (Barber & Eccles, 1992). Due to structural and systemic differences, specific family structures may be more or less likely to experience certain processes.

Divorced single-parent families may provide a context in which opportunities to develop a central role in the family are maximized. Single parents require the help of their children to maintain the household. In return, adolescents may be granted more autonomy within the family. Adolescents may become "junior partners", adopting a more responsible role

within the family (Weiss, 1985). Researchers have debated whether this process is beneficial for adolescents, leading them to "grow up a little faster", becoming independent and self-efficacious (Weiss, 1979; 1985) or is harmful to adolescents, leading to "overburdened", depressed young adults (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). In this study, we examine whether differences between family types in responsibility allocation, decision-making hierarchy, and cohesion are related to adolescent self-perceptions of being valued contributors or burdened family members.

Power and Responsibility within the Family

When families experience a structural transition, there is also a change in the balance of power. In two parent families, parents share responsibility for making decisions for the family. There is a hierarchical system where the parents are superordinate to the children. In single-parent families, this hierarchical echelon between parent and child breaks down (Weiss 1979). Thus, divorced and remarried families may differ significantly from married families in the areas of distribution of power and responsibility in the family. Resource theory provides an explanation for how authority structures can change.

According to resource theory, "a person's relative power within a relationship is proportional to the valued resources one contributes to the relationship" (Giles-Sims & Crosbie-Burnett, 1989, p. 1066). A valued resource is defined as anything one partner provides the other which helps the other partner to meet his needs or goals (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). If partner A has an alternative means of obtaining that resource, then the resource provided by partner B is less valuable, and partner B's power is reduced. However, if partner A is dependent on partner B for providing that resource, person B's power is increased (Emerson, 1962). For example, if a single-

mother is dependent on her children to complete household tasks, her children then have increased power to demand a larger decision-making role within the family.

Power Structures in Single-Parent Families

Single parents must rely on children to help the family by completing daily chores. Amato (1987) found that adolescents in divorced families had more household responsibilities than their peers in married families. The increase in responsibility may lead to greater opportunity to assume a central role in family decision-making (Barber & Eccles, 1992). Empirical research has offered some support for this conceptualization of single-parent families. Divorced families have been found to be significantly more permissive and less controlling than married families (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Hetherington, 1987; Smetana, 1993; Steinberg, 1987). In addition, adolescents in divorced families have greater opportunities to engage in family decision-making (Brown & Mann, 1990; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Flanagan, 1987). Adolescents, particularly males, in single-mother families report more autonomy in decisions regarding curfews, choice of friends, clothing, and spending money than adolescents from married families (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg, 1987). Divorced mothers of boys report perceiving rules as being less legitimately determined by parental authority than do married mothers of boys and divorced mothers of girls (Smetana, 1993).

Power Structures in Remarried Families

Remarried families have made transitions from married status, with its two-parent echelon power structure, to single-parent family, with its less hierarchical structure, to remarried family. In remarried families, power structures must be renegotiated. With the introduction of a new parent, the adolescent may lose some autonomy. Depending on whether the adolescent

enjoyed the increased responsibility, this change may be a relief or a disappointment.

There has been little research attention focused on how decision-making processes and household responsibilities operate in remarried families. Available research suggests that stepchildren perform as many household chores as their peers in single-parent families, and significantly more than their peers in married families (Amato, 1987). However, stepchildren appear to have less decision-making autonomy than adolescents in single-parent families. In addition, remarried families are more hierarchical than divorced-mother families (Steinberg, 1987). Stepfathers, who generally adopt a disengaged role early in the remarriage, become more active parents over time (Hetherington et al., 1992). Thus, adolescents in remarried families appear to retain their level of household responsibilities, but experience a decrease in decision-making autonomy. These structural transitions in power and responsibility within the family, counter to the developmental needs of the adolescent, may have a significant impact on adjustment within remarried families.

Household Work

Most adolescent children are responsible for completing chores. Large-scale surveys of families have reported that 93 to 96% of adolescents aged 15-17 are regularly required to do chores (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). Of those with chores, median hours spent completing chores were 4.2 for boys and 6.2 for girls (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). Adolescents most frequently participate in housecleaning and food preparation (Cogle & Tasker, 1982). As a result of mother's full-time employment and the fewer number of adults who live in the family, adolescents in single-parent families may be asked to complete more chores (Barber & Eccles, 1992; Weiss, 1979). Amato (1987) asked

adolescents in grades 10 and 11 to report how many, of a list of 20 chores, they completed regularly. Adolescents in married families completed the fewest (6.1 chores), adolescents in single-parent families completed the most (7.8 chores), and adolescents in remarried families completed 7.4 chores. Timmer, Eccles & O'Brien (1985) found slight differences between family types, with children of single mothers completing slightly more chores on weekends.

The relationship between household work and adolescent's perception of their role in the family (overburdened or valued contributor) may be related to the importance of the chores to the family's maintenance. Elder's (1974) Depression-era research on adolescents who provided financial support to their families revealed that contribution was related to positive mental health and higher achievement. With the advent of formal operational thought, adolescents are able to acknowledge situational constraints (Kurdek, 1986). Thus, an adolescent in a divorced family, aware that there are few adults available to complete necessary tasks (e.g., meal preparation), may be more likely to positively interpret their contribution to the family.

Family Responsibility:

Overburdened versus Valued Contributor

The increased level of responsibility in divorced families has led researchers to examine the meaning of those responsibilities to adolescents. Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1989) have described adolescents in divorced families as overburdened. However, Wallerstein's sample is a clinical one, and therefore may yield biased results. In comparison, some researchers have suggested that increased duties may have positive effects on the development of responsibility and self-reliance (Barber & Eccles, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; White & Brinkerhoff, 1981; Weiss, 1979). However, previous

research has not connected family processes (e.g., warmth or control) to the meaning adolescents attach to their responsibilities.

Cohesion may be a family process which affects adolescents' perception of their role in the family. If an adolescent perceives his or her family as supportive and emotionally close, he or she may be more likely to consider chores to be a valuable contribution. However, if family relationships are perceived as disengaged and distant, responsibility for chores is likely to be perceived as a burden. Levels of cohesion have been shown to be significantly lower in divorced and remarried families (Amato, 1987; Barber & Lyons, 1994). Adolescents in remarried families, in particular, may be sensitive to greater responsibility for chores in a less cohesive context.

Hierarchy may be another family process which influences the relationship between family structure, level of family responsibility, and the perception of oneself as burdened or as a valued contributor. Resource theory would predict that, in return for completing increased chores, adolescents in divorced families would be granted increased autonomy. Barber and Eccles (1992) have hypothesized that whether greater responsibility has positive or negative consequences depends on the level of hierarchy in the parenting environment. If embedded in a less hierarchical family environment, increased responsibility may be perceived as a valued contribution rather than a burden.

Hypotheses

Findings from previous research suggest four hypotheses about the relationships between family structure, responsible behaviors, family processes, and adolescents' perceptions of their role in the family. First, it was predicted that across family structures, mean level differences would be found in the amount of household responsibility, degree of hierarchical parenting and degree of cohesion, and cognitive interpretation of one's role

in the family. Adolescents in divorced families were expected to have the highest levels of responsible behaviors and lowest levels of hierarchical parenting, followed by adolescents in remarried families, then adolescents in married families. Cohesion was expected to be at the lowest levels in remarried families, followed by divorced families, then married families. Second, the higher level of responsibility in divorced and remarried families was expected to predict adolescents feeling more burdened and more like valued contributors. Third, the relationship between family structure, level of responsibility, and the perception of that responsibility was expected to be influenced by the degree of hierarchical parenting. If increased responsibility was accompanied by a more autonomous role, the adolescent was expected to feel that he or she was a valued contributor to the family. If the adolescent did not have a more autonomous role within the family, the weight of these responsibilities may be seen as cumbersome. Finally, the relationship between family structure, responsibility for chores, and the perception of that responsibility was expected to be influenced by family cohesion. It was predicted that adolescents would perceive their responsible role more positively in a warm and supportive family context.

Method

The data for this study were drawn from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT) (Clark & Barber, 1994; Eccles, Wigfield, Flanagan, Miller, Reumen, & Yee, 1989). In 1990, the sixth wave of MSALT data was gathered from 1,291 twelfth grade students, one month prior to the participants' graduation from high school.

Participants

The students participating in the study were from 10 middle and lower-middle class communities in southeastern Michigan and represented a range of

socio-economic and educational characteristics. There was a limited amount of ethnic diversity in the sample; 87% identified themselves as Caucasian, 7% as African-American, 1% as Asian, 1% as Latino, and 2% as Native American. At Wave 6, the ages of the participants ranged from 16 to 19; the modal age (79% of the sample) was 17. Students were originally recruited in 1983 with a permission letter distributed in their sixth grade math classes. The sample is representative of adolescents enrolled in the districts selected for study, and includes a normative sample of married families, divorced single-parent families and stepfamilies. This study includes only the cross-sectional data from the twelfth grade (Wave 6) survey.

Of the students responding at the sixth wave, 908 reported that their parents were married and living together, and 311 indicated that their parents were divorced. Within the divorced group, 137 students reported that they lived with their nonremarried mother. Four adolescents reported that their mothers lived with a male companion. These adolescents were excluded from analyses as they did not clearly belong in either the divorced or remarried categories. Because gender of custodial parent has been shown to be linked to some of the family processes of interest in this study (Kurdek & Fine, 1993), and there was a limited number of respondents living with their nonremarried father (38), these adolescents were also excluded from further analyses. Most of the adolescents whose parents were divorced reported that their parents had been apart for more than a year (93%). Twenty-four percent of the divorces had occurred 1-5 years ago, 33% had occurred 5-10 years ago, and 35% had occurred over ten years ago.

There were 108 participants living with a remarried custodial parent. Ninety lived with their mothers and 18 lived with their fathers. Only those residing with their mothers were included in the present analyses, because

there was such a limited number of remarried custodial fathers. Of the adolescents in stepfather families, 73% lived in "simple" stepfamilies, i.e., families including only biological siblings, and 27% lived in "complex" stepfamilies, i.e., families including residential stepsiblings. Most of the adolescents whose mother was remarried reported that the marriage had occurred more than 1 year ago (90%). Forty-one percent of the remarriages had occurred within the past 5 years, 49% occurred 5 to 10 years ago, and 10% occurred more than 10 years ago. Prior to the remarriage, 54% of the adolescents reported living in a single-parent family for 3 years or less. Eighty percent of the remarriages occurred within 5 years of the divorce. The final sample included 908 adolescents from married families, 133 adolescents from mother-custody divorced families, and 90 adolescents from mother-custody remarried families.

As responsibility for family chores was a prime focus of this study, mother's employment status was an important demographic category to describe (Propper, 1972). The majority of mothers in all three family categories worked for pay (84% in married families, 95% in divorced families, and 96% in remarried families). Of those mothers who were employed, 52% of mothers in married families, 89% of mothers in divorced families, and 83% of mothers in remarried families worked full-time during the respondent's high school years.

Procedure

The student questionnaire was administered in each of the high schools in May, 1990. Those students in each school who had participated in the earlier waves were excused from their regular classes and gathered in a cafeteria or auditorium. Based on pilot testing, the students were given up to 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and most finished early. Research staff members were available to answer any questions the participants had.

Measures

The measures used in the present study were from a 57-page questionnaire containing approximately 750 items. Student's perceptions of their family and self-evaluations were assessed using four- and seven-point Likert items. Family demographic questions were also included. For each scale, a mean was computed when an adolescent had non-missing data on half or more of the individual items in the scale.

Family Structure

Respondents were asked to check the marital status category of their biological ("natural") parents. The married group consisted of adolescents who reported that their parents were "married and living together" and that this had been their marital status for more than 15 years. The post-divorce group was comprised of adolescents who reported that their parents were divorced, that they lived with their mother, and that their mothers were not living with a male companion or remarried. The remarried group consisted of adolescents who reported that their parents were divorced, that they lived with their mother, and that their mother was remarried.

Family Process scales

The hierarchy scale consisted of 9 items about perceived authoritarian style parenting, parent-adolescent conflict, and lack of a decision-making role ($\alpha=.84$). Some of the items were adapted from the Epstein & McPartland (1977) Family Decision-Making Scale. Sample items included "My parents want me to follow their directions even if I disagree with their reasons" and "My parents treat me more like a little kid than like an adult". Four items were scored on seven-point Likert scales ranging from "Never" to "A lot". Five items were scored on four-point Likert scales ranging from "Never true" to "Always True". Items were standardized to ensure comparability

across the two metrics. Higher scores indicated greater hierarchical structure within a family.

The cohesion scale consisted of four items about perceived emotional support from family members and frequency of joint family activities ($\alpha=.78$). Items were adapted from the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1981). Sample items included "Our family enjoys doing things together" and "Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times". The 7-point range of the items was from "Never" to "A lot" or "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Higher scores indicated closer family relationships.

Responsibility for Family Chores

The chores scale consisted of two ordinal items about how many hours the adolescent spends each week: "Fixing family meals" and doing "Other indoor housework chores at home". Response choices consisted of 8 categories of hours per week ranging from "none" to "21 or more hours". The number of hours reported in the two items were added together.

Family Role

The valued contributor scale consisted of two seven-point Likert items assessing the adolescent's perception that his or her household work is essential to the family ($\text{correlation}=.78$). The items were "If I did not do my chores, it would be very difficult for my family" and "My parents really count on me to help around the house". Higher scores indicated greater belief that the adolescent's work is essential to the family.

The burdened scale consisted of two items addressing the adolescent's perception that his or her household chores represent an inappropriate workload ($\text{correlation}=.71$). Items included "I feel I have too many responsibilities at home for someone my age" and "I feel I do more than my

share of chores in my family". Higher scores indicated greater level of perceived burden.

Results

First, analysis of variance and chi-square tests were used to examine differences across family structure in the dependent variables: chores, cohesion, hierarchy, perception of contributor role and burdened role. Next, regression was used to test for the influence of chores and family processes on the relationship between family structure and perceived role in family.

Before addressing the hypotheses that have been outlined, three by two (marital status x child gender) analyses of variance were performed to check for interactions between marital status and gender. As there were no significant interactions, boys and girls were pooled for analyses. Thus, oneway analyses of variance with family structure were conducted for all variables. Following omnibus tests, pairwise comparisons by the Tukey procedure were completed (examined pairs were (1) married and divorced, (2) divorced and remarried, and (3) married and remarried). All post-hoc comparisons reported were significant at the .05 level.

Relation of Family Structure to Chores and Family Processes

Group means and pairwise comparisons for family processes are presented in Table 1. Hierarchy varied significantly across family types ($F(2,925) = 11.95, p < .001$). Pairwise comparisons revealed that divorced families were significantly less hierarchical than married or remarried families. Level of cohesion varied significantly by family type ($F(2,868) = 16.65, p < .001$). Divorced and remarried families were significantly less cohesive than married families. Amount of hours per week spent completing chores varied significantly by family type, with adolescents in divorced families completing

significantly more chores than their peers in married families ($F(2,1112) = 7.94, p < .001$).

 Insert Table 1 about here

Relation of Family Structure to
 Perceived Role in the Family

Results of the analyses of family structure differences in perceived role are presented in Table 2. Perception of role in family as valued contributor ($F(2,855) = 10.07, p < .001$) and as burdened ($F(2,855) = 4.61, p < .05$) varied by family type. Adolescents in divorced families perceived themselves to be significantly more valued contributors and to be more burdened than their peers in married families. Examination of means revealed that adolescents in remarried families perceived themselves as valued contributors and burdened at levels between divorced and married family adolescents, but did not differ significantly from either family group.

 Insert Table 2 about here

Multivariate Relationships between Family Structure,
 Family Processes, and Role in Family

Zero-order correlations between the family process variables and outcome variables are presented in Table 3. Examination of the correlation matrix revealed that hierarchy and cohesion were moderately and negatively related to one another ($-.31$). Research on family process has revealed that high hierarchy is negatively associated with self-esteem (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986) and high cohesion is associated with greater self-esteem, self-efficacy, and

less depression (Bachman, 1970; Barber & Lyons, 1994). As divorce was associated with one family process found to be related to positive outcomes (low hierarchy), and another which is related to negative outcomes (low cohesion), the possibility of suppression of main effects of family processes for divorced families was a concern if cohesion and hierarchy were entered into a regression together. As a result, hierarchy and cohesion were examined in separate regression equations.

Insert Table 3 about here

Path analysis was employed to examine the relationships between family structure, family processes, and perceived role in the family. For the regression procedure, the categorical variable of family structure was converted to two dichotomous dummy variables: "divorced" and "remarried" (Hardy, 1993) using binary coding (0,1). The regression analyses were conducted in two steps. First, the combined effect of chores and family structure on "burdened" and "valued contributor" was examined. Second, cohesion and hierarchy were each included separately in equations with chores and family structure to predict perceived role in family.

Role of Chores. Figure 1 illustrates the combined effect of family structure and responsibility for chores on perceived role in family. Hours of chores per week and divorce were significantly related to both burdened and contributor roles in family. Living in a divorced family predicted adolescents' perceptions of their role in the family as more valued contributors and as more burdened directly, as well as indirectly through responsibility for chores. Family structure and chores accounted for 20% of the variance in "valued contributor" and 11% of the variance in "burdened".

Insert Figure 1 about here

Chores and Family Processes. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the combined effect of family structure, chores and family processes on burdened and valued contributor roles. When added to the regression equation depicted in Figure 1, cohesion was positively related to "valued contributor", and negatively related to "burdened" (see Figure 2). Hierarchy was positively related to "burdened," but was not related to the "contributor" role (see Figure 3). In both regression equations, divorce remained significantly directly related to "contributor" (see Figures 2 and 3). For the "burdened" role variable, divorce had an indirect effect through lower cohesion and higher chores, but no significant direct effect (see Figure 2). When hierarchy was included in the regression equation instead of cohesion (see Figure 3), the direct path between divorce and "burdened" was significant. This direct effect emerged when the lower hierarchy in divorced families was controlled in the equation, indicating that at levels of hierarchy comparable to that in remarried and married families, adolescents in divorced families feel more burdened.

Together, family structure, chores, and cohesion account for 20% of the variance in contributor role and 12% in burdened role. Family structure, chores, and hierarchy account for 20% of the variance in valued contributor role and 16% in burdened role. The addition of family process variables to family structure and chores generally did not improve the percentage of the variance in "valued contributor" explained by the equation. However, when hierarchy was included in the regression equation with family structure and chores, 16% of the variance in burden was explained, as compared to 11% when chores alone was included with family structure in the regression equation.

Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

Discussion

This study focused on description of how family structure differences in levels of family responsibility and family processes were related to adolescents' perception of their role in the family. Responsible behaviors, and the contexts in which they occur, were expected to be related to adolescents' cognitive interpretation of their role in the family (as a valued contributor or as a burdened member). As predicted, chores, hierarchy and cohesion were related to family structure and perception of role in the family. This discussion focuses first on the overburdened versus valued contributor debate. Second, the lack of remarriage effects is discussed. Finally, cautionary notes regarding the findings and directions for future research are considered.

Valued Contributor or Overburdened?

A primary strength of the study is its examination of adolescents' perceptions of their role in the family, and family processes which impact those perceptions. Previous research has proposed that adolescents in divorced families feel either burdened or self-reliant as a result of their greater responsibilities within the family. There have been no large empirical studies of adolescents' perception of their family role, or family processes which may impact that perception. In addition, this study is the first to examine these processes in remarried families.

The results of the path analyses partially supported the hypothesis that whether adolescents in divorced families perceive themselves as valued contributors or as burdened depends on the context in which the behavior

occurs. Adolescents in divorced families perceived higher levels of both valued contributor role and burdened role than their peers in married families. Valued contributor was predicted primarily by divorced family status and hours per week of chores. This suggests that adolescents in divorced families are aware of the difficulties inherent in maintaining a household as a single-parent, and recognize that their contributions to the family are important. These results are consistent with ideas presented by Barber & Eccles (1992).

Burdened role was predicted by family processes as well as by divorced structure and chores. The lower levels of hierarchy in divorced families may protect adolescents from feeling even more burdened by responsibilities than they might otherwise feel, given their domestic workload. Having greater autonomy and adult-like treatment may facilitate a less resentful attitude toward household responsibilities. In contrast, the low cohesion of divorced families slightly increased the likelihood that adolescents would feel burdened.

Adolescents in divorced families not only felt more burdened by their higher responsibility level, but also perceived themselves to be more valued contributors to their family. The debate about which outcome is more likely in divorced families seems misguided. Rather, adolescents in divorced families perceive themselves in both roles. The valued contributor role seems to stem primarily from life circumstances which require adolescent family members to become central participants in household management. Regardless of family levels of warmth and control, adolescents in divorced families perceive themselves as valued contributors. The burdened role is more likely to be influenced by the level of hierarchy, in addition to greater responsibility for chores and family structure.

Lack of Remarriage Effects

As a result of limited significant group differences for remarried families, few of the hypotheses regarding adolescents in remarried families were supported. Adolescents from remarried families reported responsibility for chores, hierarchy, and role in family at levels which fell between the divorced and married groups, and did not differ significantly from either group. Adolescents perceived their remarried families to be less cohesive than did those in married families, but examination of the mean levels indicates they are functioning at what appears to be an acceptable level. In fact, as Ganong and Coleman (1994) have suggested, effective stepfamily functioning may differ from effective always-married family functioning, and optimal levels of closeness may differ across family types.

Cautionary Notes

As is the case with most research on family structure, this study is limited by inability to control for the complexity of divorced and remarried families. Sub-group comparisons among adolescents in divorced and remarried families would have yielded group sizes too small for the multiple regression procedures. Unlike many other studies of marital transitions, this study was able to provide descriptive data on variables such as length of time since divorce and remarriage and number of siblings and stepsiblings in the family. These data revealed that the divorced and remarried groups were composed of fairly long-term families: more than 90% of the divorced and remarried families had been established for longer than 1 year, and the majority had been established for more than 5 years. In addition, few remarried families (27%) included stepsiblings. Considering the importance of the household chores variable to determining role in family, future research should examine number of children in the family and the birth order of the respondent. For

example, first born adolescents with younger siblings might complete more chores than only children.

This study's reliance on self-report data can be considered a limiting factor. Since the data all derive from adolescents' reports, only conclusions regarding the adolescents' perception of family processes are possible. However, adolescents' subjective perception of family environment may be more appropriate for use as a predictor of outcomes than another person's perception of family environment. For example, adolescents' perception of the degree of cohesion in their family is likely to be more useful than another person's perception of cohesion in that family. In addition, research which has correlated "objective" assessments of family life with both adolescents' reports and parents' reports has suggested that adolescents are more accurate reporters of their family life than are their parents (Schwartz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985).

Use of self-report raises the issue of shared method variance. As the adolescent provides information on family processes and outcomes, relations between the two may be artificially inflated. For example, adolescents who are depressed may be more likely to report their families as less cohesive and more hierarchical, may perceive they are doing more hours of chores per week (or may take longer time to complete chores), and may be more likely to perceive themselves as burdened. However, since intercorrelations between the variables in the model are generally low to moderate, response bias is not likely to have accounted for the results of the present study. In addition, the questionnaire was designed so that adolescents would be discouraged from developing a response set. Items measuring family processes, mental health, chores and perception of role in family were included in separate sections of the questionnaire spread across 27 pages.

Finally, the conclusions that can be reached from the results of this study are limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data. With a "snapshot" look at these late adolescents' lives, it is not possible to assess developmental as well as family structure-related changes in family processes. Ultimately, the relationships presented in this study will be most adequately examined using longitudinal data, with attention given to the timing of increases in responsibility, both in terms of normative developmental shifts, and the more abrupt reallocation following family structure change.

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Table 1

Mean Family Processes and Family Responsibility for Adolescents from Married, Divorced and Remarried Families

	Family Type			F	Tukey's Contrast
	Married	Divorced	Remarried		
Hierarchy					
Mean	.038	-.275	.098	11.95**	D<M,R
S.D.	.64	.54	.70		
Cohesion					
Mean	4.52	3.96	3.73	16.65**	D,R<M
S.D.	1.34	1.33	1.22		
Chores					
Mean	4.90	5.60	5.19	7.94**	D>M
S.D.	1.89	2.00	2.31		

** $p < .001$

Table 2

Mean Perception of Family Role for Adolescents from Married, Divorced and Remarried Families

	Family Type			F	Tukey's Contrast
	Married	Divorced	Remarried		
Contribution					
Mean	3.36	4.12	3.62	10.07**	D>M
S.D.	1.58	1.77	1.73		
Burden					
Mean	2.87	3.31	3.16	4.61*	D>M
S.D.	1.44	1.65	1.34		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Table 3

Zero-Order Correlations Among Variables Used in Regression Models

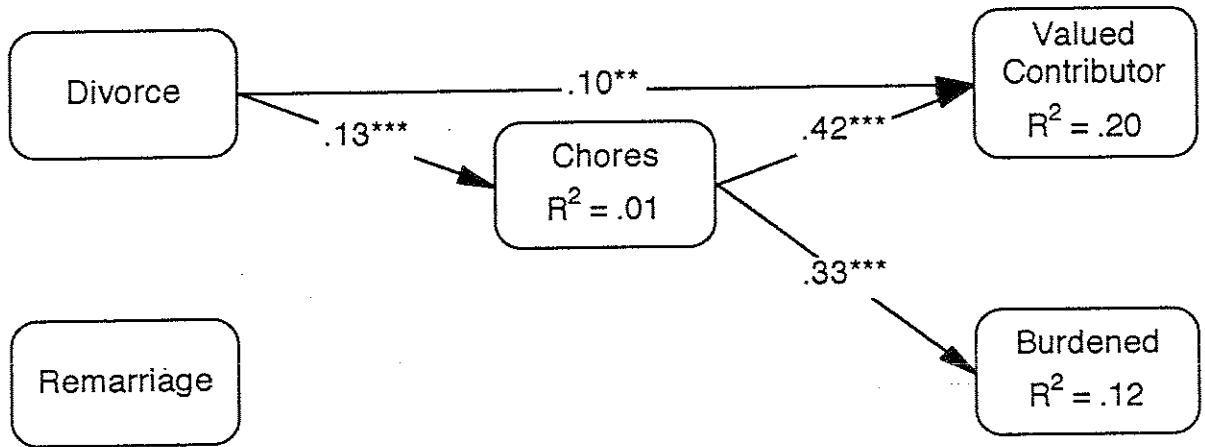
	1	2	3	4
1. Hierarchy				
2. Cohesion	-.31			
3. Chores	.02	.13		
4. Contribution	.05	.11	.43	
5. Burden	.23	-.09	.34	.60

Figure Captions

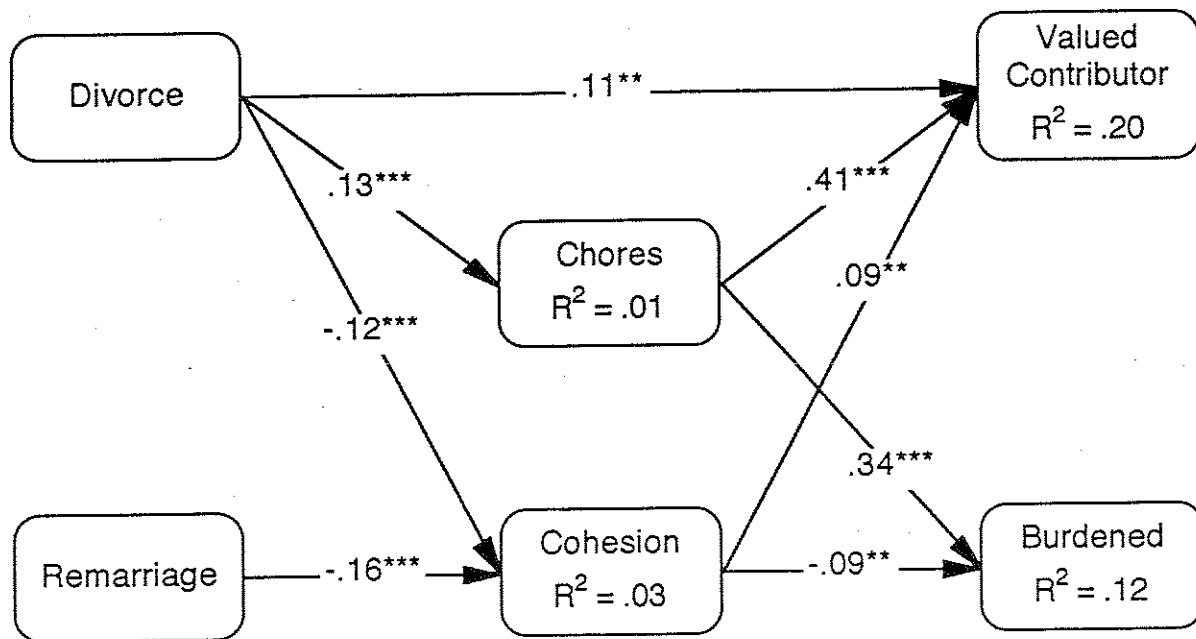
Figure 1. Effect of family structure and chores on perceived role in family.

Figure 2. Effect of family structure, chores, and cohesion on perceived role in family.

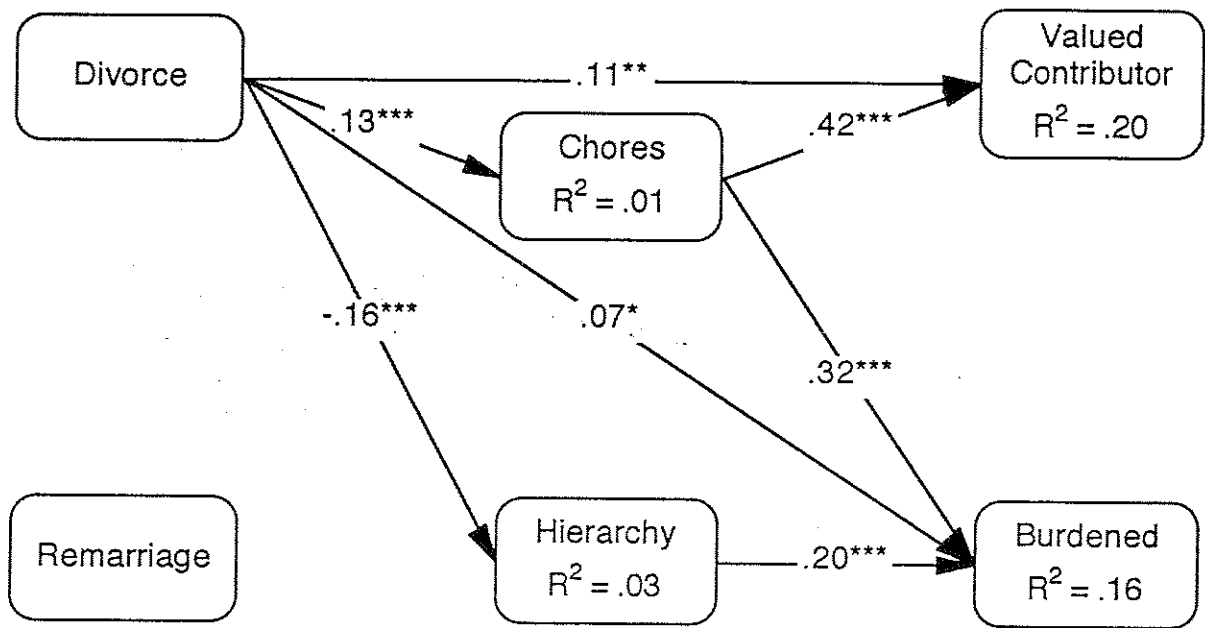
Figure 3. Effect of family structure, chores, and hierarchy on perceived role in family.



* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$



* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
 *** $p < .001$



* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
 *** $p < .001$