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Long-Term Influence of Divorce and Single Parenting on Adolescent Family- and Work-Related Values, Behaviors, and Aspirations

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Following a summary of the relevant divorce research, this article examines possible long-term influences of both divorce and living with a single mother on the development of adolescents' values and plans. We examine how divorce affects children both directly and indirectly through its impact on the mother's resources, attitudes, and socialization goals. Particular focus is placed on those aspects of family interaction that impact on identity formation as it is linked to educational and occupational goals and to gender-role related behaviors associated with marriage, family, and job plans. Possible benefits as well as potential costs of living with a single mother are discussed.

The American family is experiencing profound changes. Parental separation and divorce have become common experiences for children in the United States. Although a great deal of research has been conducted on the outcomes experienced by children in "broken" families, few studies have examined the long-term impact of growing up in a single-mother-headed household on adolescents. Past research and current political rhetoric have been driven by a value orientation that assumes that the two-parent family is the ideal family structure and that deviations from this form are risky. Most research on family structure change has taken the crisis perspective, looking for negative outcomes associated with divorce and remarriage. "Fatherless" families are considered incomplete and are frequently seen as primary contributors to delinquency, poor academic performance, dropping out of school, negative relationships with parents, decreased self-esteem, sexual promiscuity, and welfare dependence.

Although divorce has been associated with some of these outcomes, many children and families resume normal functioning following the initial crisis period after divorce. Yet the negative stereotypes of divorced families persist, and these stereotypes create additional problems for these families. In one study, for example, many of the 60 divorced women complained about the prevalence of the stereotype that children of divorce are likely to have problems (Arendell, 1986). Most of the children were doing well in school and were maturing normally, despite the many and varied adjustments required of them and the commonly held stereotypes of teachers and counselors. The single mothers' frustration with the societal perceptions of children from divorced families was poignantly expressed by one mother in this study, as follows:

> I get really upset and resentful over all the media talk about the negative effects of divorce on children. There's more of it lately than I've seen for quite a while. It just really makes me angry. I resent the tube telling me, and my kids, that "children of divorced parents don't make good peer relationships and do poorly in school, and they're likely to live a life of crime." That's *garbage!* The media ignores the fact that we have crazy people running around who grew up in the so-called normal family. I think the media are really damaging. (Arendell, 1986, p. 100)[1]

Divorce research has sustained this negative impression of single parenting. Because its emphasis has been on children's adjustment to the stressors accompanying family transitions, research on divorce focuses primarily on the difficulties encountered during the first few years after marital dissolution. Family dissolution is typically characterized as a crisis with profound negative consequences for children and adolescents as well as for their parents (Benedek & Benedek, 1979; Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). For short-term considerations and for some families, this view may be appropriate. However, examining the family's adaptation over time is crucial to understanding the long-term impact of family transitions and of single-parent status.

To more fully understand the effects of divorce on the children and adults involved, research questions need to be developed from a framework other than the common crisis perspective, and the influences of divorce need to be examined by using a more objective model. The main goal of this article is to present such a model and review supporting evidence. Because divorce can initiate a chain of multiple changes in family structure, each of which also has effects of its own on adolescent development, we are focusing this discussion on the conjoint influences of divorce and living with a single mother. In the existing literature, the effects of parental divorce and those of living with a single mother are difficult to disentangle. These two family contexts are frequently confounded, and it is often impossible to tell which effect is operating in any given study. Therefore, we discuss them together and focus primarily on the

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[1] From *Mothers and Divorce: Legal, Economic, and Social Dilemmas* (p. 100) by T. Arendell, 1986, Berkeley: University of California Press. Copyright 1986 by The Regents of the University of California.

adolescent period. In this analysis we examine how divorce affects adolescent development both directly and indirectly through its impact on the mother's resources, attitudes, and socialization goals. Particular focus is placed on those aspects of family interaction that impact on identity consolidation as it is linked to educational and occupational goals, and to gender-role related behaviors associated with marriage, family, and job plans. Possible benefits as well as potential costs of living with a single mother are discussed in terms of the following mediating and moderating variables: maternal employment, family process differences, and parental attitudes and expectations. Before examining these issues, we discuss the existing literature on divorce, as it relates to areas important for adolescent identity formation and consolidation.

Demographics of Family Structure Changes

The American family is no longer characterized by the traditional two-parent structure. There are increasing numbers of single-parent households, and both stepparent and blended families. At current rates, 50% to 60% of all children born in the early 1980s will live with only one parent for at least a year before reaching the age of 18 years (Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Glick, 1984). Although not all single parenthood is due to divorce, marital dissolution is the largest single contributor to the numbers of children living with one parent. Half of all marriages begun in the mid-1970s will end in divorce (Cherlin, 1981). Recent statistics indicate that future divorce rates may be even higher (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). However, family transitions are not limited to divorce. The remarriage of a divorced custodial parent results in a third family configuration that is experienced by an increasing number of children. Glick (1984) predicted that 35% of all children born in the early 1980s will live with a stepparent during a part of their childhood.

In view of the pervasiveness of divorce and remarriage in our culture, it is surprising how little is known about the long-term impact of these life transitions on parents and their children. Although some of the effects of family structure change may be negative, others may be positive. When an unhappy couple separates, overt conflict may decrease. In a similar manner, when a single mother remarries, she may have more free time to devote to positive interactions with her children. The new family situations encountered by children can result not only in impoverished circumstances but also in enhanced experiences. Thus, just as in intact families, children in the new family structures of today can have positive, negative, or mixed experiences. Understanding the development of children and adolescents in these new family environments presents a complex problem to those who conduct developmental research. Value judgments regarding the best type of family environment are omnipresent in the culture and are bound to affect the research process at all levels. Designing studies that will yield unbiased information on both the positive and negative consequences of changes in one's family structure is a challenge. And as will become clear in the next section, most existing research has not met this challenge particularly well.

Existing Research

Until quite recently, most researchers and mental health professionals have viewed the family as incomplete following divorce, using terms such as *father absent* and *broken* to describe single-parent female-headed families and lamenting the disappearance of the traditional family. This prevailingly negative conceptualization has biased the current knowledge base about the impact of divorce on families because of its impact on the range of outcomes and mediators studied. Key variables of adolescent development in particular—such as occupational and educational plans and values, perceived importance of financial independence, and gender-role attitudes—have received little attention.

In this section, we review and evaluate the existing literature relevant to these areas of adolescent development, most of which has grown out of a negative crisis orientation. In particular, we focus on studies looking at the impact of divorce and single-parent families on cognitive performance, delinquency, self-esteem, gender-role development, and attitudes about marriage.[2] Because changes during childhood in these areas can affect subsequent development during adolescence, the effect of divorce on these variables for children are briefly presented.

Cognitive Performance

It is commonly believed that divorce has a negative impact on children's cognitive performance. Deficits in cognitive performance have been found when children in divorced or father-absent families are compared with children from intact families, particularly in the area of quantitative performance (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Fowler & Richards, 1978; Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, & Mcloughlin, 1983; Hess & Camara, 1979; Santrock, 1972; Sciara, 1975; Shinn, 1978; Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg, & Landy, 1968). But the findings are actually rather mixed and depend on a variety of factors such as gender and age of the child, length of time since the divorce, and the type of cognitive skill tested.

Similar patterns characterize the limited research available on adolescents. Here, too, there are some reports of poorer cognitive performance among adolescents in divorced families (Forehand, Middleton, & Long, 1987; Zimiles & Lee, 1991). However, the differences between divorced and two-parent family groups are usually small, may decrease over time, and often disappear when income, parental occupation, or parental conflict are statistically controlled in analyses (Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987; Smith, 1990; Svanum, Bringle, & McLaughlin, 1982). Thus, although some decrements are found in cognitive performance following divorce, the data are far from conclusive, and the necessary longitudinal studies comparing the same children's cognitive performance before and after their parents' marital dissolution have rarely been done.

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[2] Several well-known studies have been omitted or are not discussed in detail because they lack adequate control groups or have such limited samples that generalizability of inferences drawn from these studies is unknown. See the methodological critique for more details.

Delinquency

The extent to which living with a single divorced mother is predictive of delinquent or antisocial behavior has been examined extensively: Children and adolescents from divorced families are more likely to engage in deviant behavior than children in intact families (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, & Chen, 1985; Peterson & Zill, 1983; Zill, 1978).

The most popular process-focused explanation for these higher rates is decreased parental supervision in single-parent homes (e.g., Dornbusch et al., 1985). For White and Hispanic children, growing up in a divorced single-parent family has been linked to less parental supervision (McLanahan, Astone, & Marks, 1988). With less parental supervision, children may be more susceptible to the influence of other socializing agents, such as their peers. In turn, greater compliance with peer pressure could increase the likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior. In support of this perspective, adolescents living with both natural parents have been found to be less susceptible to pressure from friends to engage in deviant behavior than adolescents in single-parent homes (Steinberg, 1987), even when sex, age, socioeconomic status, maternal employment, and family decision making are controlled.

Self-Esteem

With a number of psychologists concerned about the psychological functioning of children from single-mother homes, a great deal of research has focused on personal adjustment and, more particularly, on self-esteem. In some studies, parental divorce and father absence have been associated with lower self-esteem and lower feelings of competence in children and adolescents, especially in the short term (Brody, 1986; Nastasi & Guidubaldi, 1987; Parish & Dostal, 1980; Parish & Wigle, 1985; Smith, 1990; Young & Parish, 1977), but these differences often decline over time (Nastasi & Guidubaldi, 1987; Parish & Wigle, 1985). Other studies, however, fail to find such differences for children (Berg & Kelly, 1979; Kinard & Reinherz, 1984), college students (Kalter et al., 1985; Long, 1986; Parish, 1981), or adults (Amato, 1988). Thus, as with cognitive performance, the differences in self-esteem between children in divorced and intact families are not consistent and, when there are differences, they decrease over time.

Gender-Role Development

Another domain that has received a lot of attention is gender-role development. The presumption of much of this research has been that traditional gender roles are a sign of good adjustment. Although this assumption is now being questioned, these studies are potentially interesting for what they can tell us about the role of mothers' and fathers' presences in gender-role development.

In a comprehensive meta-analysis of the literature on father absence and gender-role development, Stevenson and Black (1988) concluded that the overall differences between family types were not large and that better quality studies found no differences. Better quality studies controlled for important characteristics of family structure and other confounding variables, such as presence of a surrogate father, socioeconomic status, and age and sex of the child. In addition, although there was little evidence for differences between father-absent and father-present girls on gender-role measures, the effects were significant but small for boys, with father-present boys (especially preschool age) being more stereotypically gender-role typed. These findings are consistent with an earlier review by Herzog and Sudia (1973) that found little or no differences on measures of sex-role attitudes for father-absent children but some association between father absence and sex-role identity problems for boys. Although the literature suggests little effect of divorce on gender-role development in childhood, it remains an open issue for gender-role related values related to family and work in adolescence.

Attitudes Toward Marriage

It has also been suggested that divorce produces more negative attitudes toward the institution of marriage (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). Women from intact families have been found to have more positive attitudes about marriage and more negative attitudes toward divorce than those from divorced, separated, or reconstituted families (Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kinnaird & Gerrard, 1986). Whether the difference is seen as good or bad depends on the values of researchers because accepting attitudes toward divorce and lower commitments to marriage may be seen as either a negative outcome or an adaptive positive outcome.

Most researchers who interpret this effect as negative do so because such attitudes are likely to increase the probability that one will seek a divorce once one is an adult. Parental divorce has been cited as a contributor to subsequent marital dissolution for the children involved (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Keith & Finlay, 1988; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). This intergenerational transmission of divorce has been attributed, in part, to a lower commitment to marriage and, in part, to a tendency of children of divorce to marry at an earlier age. An alternate possibility is that these women perceive the option to leave a bad marriage as viable, and choosing to leave a marriage may be positive for these women and reflect their personal courage. They have seen their mothers adapt to the change in family roles and may feel that it is better to terminate an unhappy marriage than to stay in it. Having observed their mothers' situation, these women may also have obtained jobs that give them sufficient economic independence to seek divorce as a solution to a bad marriage. This possibility is discussed more fully later.

Some studies do not support the strong long-term influence of parental divorce on the child's subsequent marital patterns. For example, Kulka and Weingarten (1979) found only moderate evidence for the intergenerational transmission of marital instability, and nothing in their results suggests a major long-term adjustment problem in adults who experienced parental divorce as children. However, they did suggest that married women from divorced-parent families consider the marital role as less important than their married peers from intact families. Women from nonintact families of origin were more likely to identify positive appraisals of their work role as more important than their role as wives. It is interesting that the men in their study do not show these differences.

Finally, it may not be parental marital status that contributes to the negative attitudes about marriage but the ongoing parental conflict that precedes the divorce and the ensuing negative relationship between the children and parents. If a child observes a marriage that is unhappy, it may not be the legal marital status that influences the ensuing negative attitudes about marriage, but the observation that it is unhappy. In summary, the attitudes described earlier indicate that exposure to divorce may contribute to children's awareness of divorce as an alternative that they can choose and to a reduction in the value of the marital role relative to other domains.

Summary

Numerous reviews have examined assertions that divorce has a strong negative influence on children. However, much of the existing evidence is contradictory. Child outcomes depend on factors such as the age and sex of the child, length of time in a single-parent family, family economic resources, and parental conflict before and after the divorce. Individuals respond differently to marital dissolution, and the adversity commonly attributed to divorce is not inevitable (Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Kalter, 1990). Although some children exhibit disruptions in development, others adapt with competence. In fact, the evidence seems to be converging to the point that children in single-mother families are not as different from children in two-parent families as traditionally believed and that individual differences within groups are generally much larger than differences between groups. Further examination of those individual differences may reveal a great deal about the processes involved in adjustment to family transitions. Finally, even when reliable differences between family types emerge, it is often not clear whether these differences should be interpreted as positive, neutral, or negative outcomes.

Conceptual and Methodological Critiques

With the growing awareness that the disaster perspective remains relatively unsubstantiated for most outcome measures, there has been a gradual shift in the popular conceptualization of divorce. Rather than viewing it as a pathology, researchers have begun to focus on more normative family patterns following divorce. The preponderance of research, however, still focuses on possible negative consequences experienced by children and adults involved in family structure changes and often focuses on these outcomes without examining the processes involved, making it difficult to understand the mechanisms underlying the obtained effects.[3] The many other methodological problems that plague the existing research base have been reviewed elsewhere (Emery, 1988; Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984). In this section we focus our critique on those most likely to be important when considering the development of adolescent values and plans; these include the need to separate divorce effects from the effects of other types of father absence, the lack of longitudinal data, insensitivity to cohort effects, sample selection, and the confounds of single motherhood and low income and of divorce and parental conflict. These problems, in general, make it difficult to know whether obtained negative outcomes are due to divorce, father absence, income loss, characteristics of the sample, or some other mediating variable.

Differentiation Between Family Types

An important shortcoming of father-absence research is that divorce is often not singled out from other types of marital dissolution (Stevenson & Black, 1988). Sorting all families into two or three types is an impossible task given the current complexity of family structures in the United States. Because of this difficulty, studies that dichotomize intact and single-mother-headed families obscure a number of possible configurations. Discussions of father absence include not only children of divorced families but also those whose fathers have died or who were away on active military service, or whose mothers never married. It is important not to group divorced, widowed, and never-married mothers together because the impact of divorce may make mothers and their children different from those who never went through marital dissolution. Particularly in the formation of values and aspirations related to family relationships, these various family types should provide different experiences and thus should not be considered equivalent.

Need for Longitudinal Studies

There has been very little longitudinal divorce research, and the cross-sectional designs used to assess effects do not allow for examination of causal directions or developmental effects. Some characteristics of children seen as a consequence of divorce may be present prior to marital dissolution (Cherlin et al., 1991; Doherty & Needle, 1991). For example, Block, Block, and Gjerde (1986) recently reported that behavioral problems often considered effects of divorce were reported years earlier while the family was still intact. In a similar manner, characteristics of mothers that influence those of their children may be present before divorce. For instance, if mothers with less traditional values are more likely to divorce, subsequent differences in their children's value for egalitarian adult roles may have been present before the divorce. Without longitudinal prospective studies, it is impossible to untangle preexisting differences in values from differences that are a consequence of divorce.

Need for Sensitivity to Cohort Effects

There are also very few recent studies of the long-term influences of divorce. Divorce is becoming more common, and the types of people who are divorcing may be different than in populations studied in the past. Because the stigma of marital dissolution has been greatly reduced by its increasing prevalence, there may be even fewer long-term negative effects found in contemporary children of divorce. Longitudinal data are needed for current cohorts of divorcing families to determine if findings from the past two decades resulted from time-bound experiences no longer prevalent today.

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[3] There are some notable exceptions that do study process variables, for example, Hetherington and colleagues (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1985), Dornbusch and colleagues (Dornbusch et al., 1985), and Steinberg (1987).

Sample Selection

The research on divorce is notable for its use of problematic samples. Often, they are small, unrepresentative populations of clinic patients, who are likely to be more seriously distressed than a random sample of children whose parents have divorced. In fact, some of the most often cited and accepted research on divorce suffers from this problem (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1976, 1977; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976, 1980). Samples also are predominantly drawn from White middle-class families (Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1978, 1979). Findings from these studies may not be generalizable to other ethnic and economic groups. Even when randomly selected samples are used, it is rare that the sample is large enough to do complex, multivariate analyses. When large samples representative of the population are used, studies often do not find the expected negative effects, or they find that the magnitude of the differences between groups is negligible (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979).

Self-Selection to Divorce and Remarriage

In addition to other sample-related problems, researchers examining long-term effects must also consider the impact of remarriage on any sample of divorced families studied longitudinally. From 1975 to 1980, the number of mothers with two to five children who remarried within less than 2 years increased dramatically (Glick & Lin, 1986). In contrast, during the same time period, the average length of time between divorce and remarriage increased for childless divorced women. These changes in remarriage rates influence the study of divorce and single parenthood. It is difficult to study the long-term impact of living with a single mother because such a large percentage of divorced women remarry. In Hetherington's (1988) follow-up study, less than a third of the divorced mothers were still unmarried 6 years later. Are the mothers who remain single fundamentally different—more self-sufficient and better at coping, or more disturbed? For example, mothers who remarry may be those who are able to have better relationships with people, thus research on mothers who stay single may be biased toward finding poorer relationships in those families.

Alternatively, mothers who are able to maintain a family while staying single may be more capable and independent. One factor that is predictive of marital dissolution and reconstitution is socioeconomic status. Educational attainment and income have been found to be positively related to marital stability in both men and women, except among the most highly educated and well-paid women (Cutright, 1971; Glick & Norton, 1977; Sander, 1985). Some research has suggested that a positive relationship may exist between income and divorce among this latter group of women. For example, Havens (1973) found a positive relationship between women's income and divorce and proposed that having a high income might enable women to choose not to be married. In fact, the increasing participation of women in the labor force and their heightened earning power have both been cited as contributing to the increasing divorce rates (Becker, Landes, & Michael, 1977), perhaps because of working women's greater financial independence. These highly educated and well-paid women may also be less likely to remarry than their less well-paid peers for the same reasons. For example, women without a high school diploma are more likely to remarry than those with some college education, regardless of the number of children (Glick & Lin, 1986). One feasible explanation for the higher propensity to remarry among those with less education is lower earning ability. These women may need the income of a male head of household for economic survival, whereas women with more education and thus higher earning ability may be freer to choose to delay remarriage or to remain single indefinitely. Thus, in considering whether divorce and subsequent single parenting has an effect on development, it is crucial to investigate how mothers who become and stay single differ from their married and remarried peers.

Economic Resources

Another concern for research in this area is the confound between marital status and income. Marital dissolution leads to a sharp decline in the economic situation of women and their children (Arendell, 1986; Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974; Espenshade, 1979; S. Hoffman, 1977; Weitzman, 1985). Female-headed families are disproportionately represented in the poverty population because couples who divorce are likely to have had relatively lower incomes initially and, following divorce, the mother and children experience a dramatic drop in their financial situation because of unfavorable divorce settlements and failure of fathers to make child support payments (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Duncan & Rodgers, 1988; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; S. Hoffman, 1977; Sander, 1985; Sawhill, 1976). In contrast, after divorce, ex-husbands are usually better off financially than they were before the divorce (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Espenshade, 1979; Weitzman, 1985). This drop in financial resources could be responsible for some of the negative outcomes associated with divorce (Marotz-Baden, Adams, Bueche, Munro, & Munro, 1979). Income is known to have an important effect on many of the outcome variables and supposed mediators (such as restrictive and demanding parenting style) of interest to researchers in this domain (Barber, 1987; Colletta, 1979a, 1983; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Shinn, 1978; Svanum et al., 1982). Thus, it is not surprising that differences between children in single-mother households and those in dual-parent households frequently disappear or become negligible when income is controlled in analyses.

Unfortunately, interpretation of this income effect is virtually impossible unless one knows pre-divorce income levels and pre-divorce family cultural background. To the extent that lower post-divorce income reflects either lower pre-divorce income or pre-divorce family background, controlling for income is likely to be equivalent to controlling for social class. However, if divorce adversely affects the income level of a family, controlling for post-divorce income would remove the variance attributable to divorce that is mediated through income loss (Svanum et al., 1982). Use of path analysis or structural equation modeling that includes post-divorce income and controls for pre-divorce income would be an appropriate analytic

strategy to determine the impact of income loss on post-divorce outcome measures.

Parental Conflict

Typically, parents who divorce have lived together unhappily for some time prior to the dissolution. Children who are raised in these homes have experienced conflict in varying degrees through each stage of the transition. As is true for income, parental conflict is likely to affect both the outcomes and proposed mediators of interest. Both McCord, McCord, and Thurber (1962) and Westerman and colleagues have posited that the effects of father absence could largely be attributed to the intense parental conflict and rejection that commonly occur in divorced families (Westerman, LaLuz, Cavallaro, & Tanaka, 1986; Westerman, Tanaka, & Christopoulous, 1986). Thus, in conducting divorce research, it is important to evaluate the role of parental conflict in outcomes often attributed to marital dissolution.

Link between parental conflict and child outcomes. Parental conflict has numerous negative effects on children (Long, 1986; Peterson & Zill, 1983; Rutter, 1971). For example, ongoing parental conflict has been associated with children's poorer school performance, lower grades, less social competence with peers, and lower self-perceptions of intelligence and popularity (Brody, 1986; Long et al., 1987; McCombs & Forehand, 1989). Because of this, divorce can be a positive change when it leads to a decline of parental conflict: Living in a two-parent, highly conflictive home can be worse for development than living in a single-parent home. In support of this position, both Long (1986) and Peterson and Zill (1983) found that marital conflict (especially persistently high conflict) in intact homes is as harmful (if not more so) to parent–child relationships as marital disruption itself.

If pre-divorce conflict is an important influence, then post-divorce conflict may also be an important moderator variable. Children who experience high parental conflict in combination with divorce exhibit decreased cognitive functioning relative to their peers in low-conflict divorced homes and intact low- or high-conflict homes (Forehand, McCombs, Long, Brody, & Fauber, 1988). In contrast, the social adjustment of children in this study was affected by parental conflict regardless of parental marital status. Post-divorce conflict can have a direct effect on the children through its impact on the affective environment they live in, similar to its pre-divorce effect. It can also have an indirect effect through its impact on the noncustodial parent's continued involvement. Emery, Hetherington, and DiLalla (1984) proposed that the divisive process of a custody conflict can diminish the noncustodial parent's commitment to the family and lead to less parental involvement. Relatively little research has assessed either of these types of effects. Existing research suggests that following divorce, parental conflict is an important predictor of adjustment (Kline, Tschann, Johnston, & Wallerstein, 1989).

In summary, problems with the confound of conflict and family structure confront researchers in this domain. As with income, measures of the level of conflict before and after divorce should be collected whenever possible. In addition, the decision of whether or not to control for discord must be made on conceptual grounds.

Conclusions

Divorce research must now go beyond the narrow conceptualization of a family transition as a crisis-potentiating event. New frameworks must be constructed that describe normal development in single-parent families. The assessment of new models should take advantage of the existing knowledge base on methodological pitfalls and possible confounding factors, such as income and conflict. In the balance of this article we propose one direction in which research on family transitions could progress, by using a model of normative development to describe the outcomes experienced in single-mother families.

Normal Development in Single-Mother Families

Besides being considered a time of crisis, divorce and subsequent single parenting provides a new context for development. Many children and families recover from the initial distress and resume normal functioning within a few years if there is not continued severe stress and adversity (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982). Although some children exhibit disruptions in development, others manifest competency and resilience (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). In fact, not only may the negative effects of divorce be avoidable, it is also possible that there are some long-term positive effects of this difficult time. Growing up with a single mother presents children and adolescents with a unique set of challenges, thus allowing for the development of new skills and coping strategies. The divorced family can be a context that promotes competence and independence and helps to strengthen the individual against later stressors. This view may be particularly relevant for adolescents who experienced the divorce prior to entry into adolescence. Their past experience of coping with a nonnormative transition may alter the course of adaptation to the multiple normative tasks of adolescence in either facilitative or detrimental ways. This perspective allows for the identification of the factors that contribute to both positive and negative development and for a reconsideration of the position that the nuclear family is the only ideal context for the socialization of children.

It is important to emphasize here that the focus of this discussion is on the long-term, not immediate, consequences of divorce for adolescents. A parental divorce during adolescence leads to the combination of the multiple normative changes of this age group with a nonnormative family disruption. On the one hand, the accumulation of such changes may put adolescents at greater risk than adolescents experiencing only the normative life changes associated with this developmental period (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). On the other hand, Hetherington and Anderson (1988) have suggested that although this combination may result in increased vulnerability, adolescents' varied personal, cognitive, emotional, and social resources should lead to great variability in their response to divorce. Rather than discuss the combination of these events as stressors, we have chosen to concentrate on the developmental paths of those adolescents who have lived for some time in single-mother-headed families.

In attempting to identify variables that promote resilience, one must identify meaningful areas in which adolescents living with a divorced mother could have an advantage over, or at least be on par with, their peers. For the purposes of this article, outcomes that might be uniquely affected by living with a divorced mother were selected for discussion. Areas of development that should be particularly influenced by family structure during this period include career aspirations, gender-role values, plans for integrating work and family roles, self-concept and feelings of competence, and achievement-related behaviors. These domains were selected because they are closely linked to areas in which single mothers are likely to provide a different socialization environment than always-married mothers.

These outcomes can be affected in two very different ways by family structure changes. The absolute level of the variables could be lower or higher for children living in single-mother families, or the specific content or pattern of outcomes could be affected. For example, relative deficits in cognitive functioning have been reported for children in father-absent families, thus the level of performance is lower for these children. However, some studies suggest that achievement *patterns* are also different in various family types, with children in father-absent homes doing relatively better on tests of verbal skills than on tests of quantitative skills (Carlsmith, 1964; Lessing, Zagorin, & Nelson, 1970). The usual pattern of cognitive abilities, in which boys perform higher on math than on verbal measures (Hyde, 1981; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), is reversed in these studies for sons living with single mothers. Although this pattern usually results from deficits in quantitative performance, some studies have found a positive advantage for children in father-absent homes on verbal measures (Carlsmith, 1964; Lessing, Zagorin, & Nelson, 1970; Oshman, 1975), thus the specific skills are channeled differently.

Similar types of channeling may apply to career aspirations. In addition to having generally lower or higher job aspirations, adolescents in single-mother families may also aspire to different types of careers than adolescents in always-married families. For example, they may be more or less likely to choose math-related fields, taking advantage of the pattern of their cognitive strengths and weaknesses. They may also be less influenced by the gender-role "inappropriateness" of various occupations. The following discussion will describe possible benefits to adolescents' specific occupational goals and values.

Gender Differences in Adolescent Plans and Values

One key task of the adolescent period is identity formation and consolidation. It is the time in which individuals must make commitments to certain specific goals and pathways that will potentially have long-term implications for their future life course (Marcia, 1980). It is also a time when adolescents' images of various future possible selves take shape and may begin to influence occupational and family planning (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Wurf, 1987). During the high school years, the emergence of specific educational, occupational, marital, and parental goals and the commitment to specific work and family values is a major component of this consolidation process, as is the commitment to particular views of "appropriate" family roles and plans for integrating work and family. These are all domains in which there are distinct gender-role prescriptions for adolescents to follow. Moreover, despite the impact of the women's movement, these prescriptions remain fairly gender-role stereotyped (Eccles, 1987; Eccles & Hoffman, 1984).

Probably the area that has seen the most change is the work domain. Women have entered the work force in growing numbers. Has this affected adolescents' work and educational plans or adolescents' vision of their future possible selves in terms of work and family roles? The evidence is mixed. Traditionally, males and females have had gender-role typical occupational aspirations (Rosen & Aneshensel, 1978). In the past two decades, however, there has been an increasing similarity in the general values male and female college students have toward work due to the increasing importance women are placing on status-attainment goals (Fiorentine, 1988). The evidence for more representative samples of America's youth is more mixed. Herzog and Bachman (1982), for example, reported that even though the educational plans and values of a national sample of male and female high school students were not very different, large sex differences existed in occupational plans and values, with women attributing lower importance to status and money in the selection of a job. In addition, although the percentage of college women planning to enter higher status occupations has increased somewhat, work plans of both college students and other adolescents are still gender-role stereotyped to a large degree (Eccles, 1987; Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Gerstein, Lichtman, & Barokas, 1988; Herzog, 1982; Marini, 1978). The persistence of this finding is especially interesting in light of the fact that girls are increasingly faced with incentives, such as the growing numbers of mother-headed households, to develop skills that will lead to secure and well-paid employment. In sum, therefore, some change has been observed in both work values and goals, especially among female college populations. However, even among these populations, the large majority of adolescents still plan to enter gender-role appropriate occupational fields.

Furthermore, the change in work values and goals has not been accompanied by a decrease in women's valuing of the traditional female family role (Fiorentine, 1988). Regardless of the status of their planned occupation, women still have higher expectations than men for early marriage and childbearing (Aneshensel & Rosen, 1980; Wagenaar, 1984). Traditionally, girls have perceived their roles in the workplace and the family as linked and they apparently still do, by and large (Affleck, Morgan, & Hayes, 1989). Young women attribute very high importance to family and children and show more willingness to modify work roles for the sake of family roles than are their male peers (Herzog & Bachman, 1982).

Given the gender differences that exist in occupational and family plans and aspirations, it is likely that the influence of living with a divorced mother on these areas of development would vary for boys and girls. The most salient difference between parental role models in two-parent and divorced families is the dual nature of the single mother's role. She must occupy both the domestic and labor market realms. Certainly there are many mothers in dual-career families who occupy both spheres, but they are not the sole occupant of those roles in their

families. Differences in single mothers' roles should interact with the sex of her children in influencing the ontogeny of the children's family and work values. Daughters who are living with the same-sex parent should be more influenced than sons by exposure to the combination of roles modeled by single mothers. This should be especially true in adolescence when both girls and boys are formulating their views of the "appropriate" work and family roles for men and women and are incorporating aspects of these views in their own self systems in terms of their future possible selves (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

It seems likely that growing up in a single-mother-headed household will influence values for work and family for the following reasons: (a) Maternal employment, which can influence the traditionality of children's educational and occupational values, is related to family structure; (b) single mothers may use different parenting styles than married parents in areas such as responsibility allocation and discipline style, leading to independence and self-esteem differences in their children; (c) family structure may affect maternal expectations, which are in turn related to children's educational and vocational outcomes. In this article we evaluate each of these three possible mechanisms by which living in a single-parent, female-headed family might have an important impact on nontraditional aspirations and values.

Normative Model of Development in Single-Mother Families

What processes are involved in the transmission of occupational values and goals, and how are these different in single-mother families? A model of educational and vocational choice has been presented by Eccles (1987); in this model, socialized values and expectations for success in different roles are related to educational and occupational choices. Task values are defined in terms of perceived utility of the task for long-term goals, more immediate intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, personal needs and values fulfilled by the task, and perceived costs of engaging in the activity. Eccles proposed that these individual values as well as one's estimates of probability of success in achievement-related options result from socialization experiences, self-perception of past performance, and the individual's conceptions of different beliefs, goals, and behaviors. The following two aspects of the model seem especially relevant to our discussion here: (a) Impact of gender roles on occupational values, and (b) potential cost of investing in one activity rather than another.

Gender-role values should be related to vocational choices: Women who hold nontraditional beliefs should prefer and select more career-oriented occupations, and women who accept the traditional gender-role stereotyped societal roles should attach higher value to flexible jobs. In support of this idea, Herzog and Bachman (1982) found that women's decisions about whether to be employed at all, and their expectations for their commitment to the labor market, were related to gender-role traditionality. Furthermore, for young women, expected timing of marriage was shown to be related to traditionality, with more traditional women expecting to marry earlier. To the extent that the women expected work roles to be a central part of their lives, they planned for a relatively long delay prior to marriage.

Do the daughters of divorced mothers expect to spend more time in the labor force and, if so, do they have a stronger commitment to occupational goals than girls who expect to allocate more time to family goals and plan intermittent participation in the labor force? Will they have less traditional occupational preferences to obtain higher paying jobs? It is fortunate that there has been some work focusing on these questions. Waite and Berryman (1985) reported on a subset of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Labor Market Behavior (NLS). The sample consisted of 14- to 17-year-old men and women responding in 1979. They identified factors that predisposed women to be in nontraditional occupations and found that marital, parenting, and gender-role expectations affect the gender typicality of the occupational choices of high school girls, but not of boys. As girls increase their planned commitments to the labor force relative to the home, the traditionality of their occupational choices decreased and the chances of choosing traditional male occupations increased. They suggest that changing young women's occupational choices requires changing their expected time allocations to the labor force and the home.

Support has also been found for the intergenerational transmission of behaviors and attitudes from single mothers to their daughters; for example, for girls, being in a female-headed household at age 14 decreased the chances of choosing a traditional female occupation and increased the chances of choosing a traditional male occupation (Shapiro & Crowley, 1982; Waite & Berryman, 1985). The effect was greatest for White girls. Boys in a female-headed household were less apt to select traditionally male jobs than boys in intact families.

Closely related to gender-role values, the perceived potential cost of investing in one activity rather than another also is likely to be related to family constellation. Daughters of single mothers may be more reluctant to make sacrifices in the occupational domain for participation in marital and family domains because the observed costs following divorce can be tremendous. Daughters may regard their mother's life situation negatively if she made a commitment to family but not to the labor force and then became divorced. In support of this idea, Kaufman (1987) reported that some daughters of divorced mothers wanted different roles from those their mothers had modeled—an identity separate from that of wife or mother. These girls may subsequently be more likely to place greater value on economic independence. If daughters perceive a need to be self-supporting for their economic survival, it may have a significant effect on their choices of higher-paying, less gender-role stereotyped jobs. Observing their mother's resulting financial and job difficulties may lead daughters away from the traditional labor force and family choices made by their mothers and seen by them as responsible for their mothers' ensuing problems. For instance, a girl who is considering the marital role may be reluctant to become financially dependent on her spouse because she has seen the high cost of this dependency when marriage fails. To protect herself, she may choose to both marry and develop a professional role that allows her to be financially independent. The value of economic independence and its role in the development of occupational aspirations has received no attention in the divorce literature and should be

targeted as a domain of study in which children in single-mother families may have an advantage.

A model of long-term influences of family structure on the development of occupational aspirations, based on some of the components in the Eccles (1987) model, is presented in Figure 1. This model is proposed as a conceptual example of a family of models all of which assume that family structure influences the child's outcomes indirectly through its impact on various aspects of the children's home environment. This model focuses on a subset of components that are likely to be linked to the socialization of occupational aspirations. In particular, it focuses on the following three mediating factors: maternal employment, family processes, and parental expectations. These variables are proposed to have an impact on adolescent values, self-concept, and achievement, which in turn are predicted to influence educational and occupational aspirations. It is clear that bidirectional effects could operate in this system, with characteristics of the adolescent influencing maternal variables. It is also likely that variables within a column influence each other (e.g., adolescent beliefs are likely to interact with each other). However, these relationships are beyond the scope of the issues being addressed in this article. The remainder of the article is a discussion of this model. However, first a brief discussion of moderating and mediating effects is warranted.

Mediators and Moderators

Because the terms *mediate* and *moderate* are often used interchangeably in the literature, the usage in this article will be explicitly defined. A mediating variable is defined as a connection through which a relationship is passed. Such a variable accounts at least in part for the relationship between two variables. For example, when examining the relationship between parental divorce and achievement, one could propose that the poverty that accompanies divorce is causing the lowered achievement, and not the divorce itself. In this framework, income is conceived as a mediator, and divorce is assumed to have an indirect effect on achievement through its effect on income. Alternatively, income could be a moderating variable, influencing the magnitude of the effect of one factor on another. Income would be interpreted as a moderator if one predicted that divorce itself negatively affects achievement but that the relationship is influenced by different levels of income, such as mothers with high incomes providing a more protective environment for their children.

For the purposes of this article, we are focusing on the mediation role of maternal employment, family processes, and parental expectations. To the extent that differences exist across family types on these three variables, they could also play a moderating role, but this possibility is beyond the scope of the present article.[4]

In the following discussion of the model, the link between family structure and the mediational role of intervening variables is examined. There is a paucity of research on the role of these variables in the relationship between divorce and adolescent self-concept, values, achievement, and aspirations. Thus, discussion and the link of each mediating variable are limited to the subset of the outcomes for which empirical support for the linkage is available. Gaps in the existing knowledge base are highlighted, and brief speculation on the unknown relationships is presented.

Maternal Employment

Divorce frequently leads to an increase in maternal participation in the labor force and a decrease in the amount of time mothers have to spend with their children. Women who were not working outside the home before the divorce are likely to begin to do so, and those who were working outside part-time increase their work hours (Espenshade, 1979). In 1984, 79% of divorced mothers were in the labor force, compared with 59% of the women in intact families (Norton & Glick, 1986). How might this difference affect child development? Maternal employment could affect the child through the following two distinctly different mechanisms: (a) time spent with the child, and (b) modeling of the occupational role. Having less available time and energy, single employed mothers may be less available to help with schoolwork and to supervise their children's activities, leading to a decline in their children's academic performance and increased risk of negative peer influence. Alternatively, divorced women who work full-time may provide their children with a role model different from that observed by children in intact families with non-career-oriented mothers. This difference, in turn, could affect their children's developing career values and goals.

Time spent with the child. L. Hoffman (1986) suggested that work takes time and energy away from the family and that the relationship between maternal employment and negative outcomes for children may be curvilinear. Too much time spent on the job may be negative, but a moderate amount of time may be positive because part-time employment seems to be related to more positive child outcomes (L. Hoffman, 1989). If this is true, then single mothers are faced with a dilemma because they are often forced by economic necessity to work at least full-time, and often more than full-time. In contrast, mothers in intact families are less likely to *have* to work full-time and in fact do work outside the home fewer hours on the average than single mothers (Duckett & Richards, 1989). As a result, mothers in intact families may come closer to working an optimal amount (if such an amount exists), whereas single mothers may have to overcommit themselves to the labor market, resulting in negative outcomes for themselves and their children. Specifically, the lack of time that single, employed mothers have to spend helping their child, combined with scarce resources for outside help, may negatively affect their child's school achievement. A decline in the child's academic performance may then lead both the mother and child to lower their educational goals and occupational aspirations for the child.

Lack of time can also affect school achievement indirectly through its impact on the mother's ability to adequately supervise and manage her child's out-of-school activities. Inadequate afterschool supervision may increase the child's risk for involve-

[4] The distinction between mediators and moderators is outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) and they have presented specific analysis techniques for distinguishing these two kinds of effects.

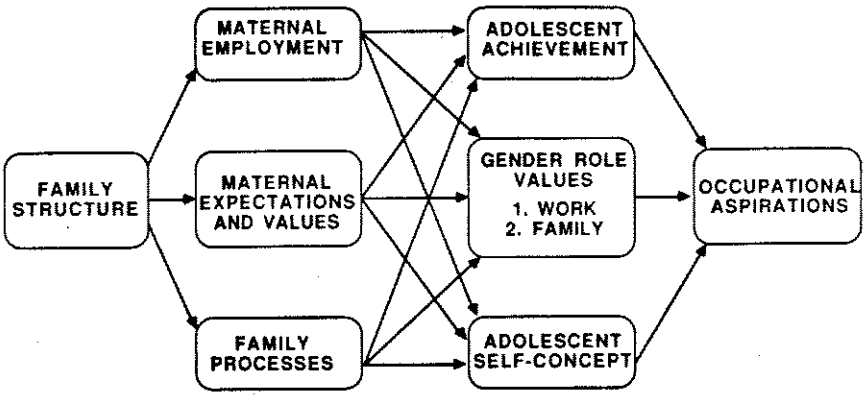

Figure 1. Model of processes mediating family structure effects on the development of occupational values and goals.

ment in nonproductive, and perhaps even deviant activities, both of which can negatively affect the child's school achievement (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). These effects, however, can be counteracted if the mother can provide for adequate supplemental help and supervision. Studies suggest, in fact, that the income mothers bring in from working can more than compensate for the lost parenting time in terms of influences on children's school achievement (L. Hoffman, 1979; Stafford, 1987).

Role modeling. Single mothers' employment may also affect adolescent identity development through the processes associated with role modeling. In most cases, the mother, at least for awhile, must assume a new role vis-à-vis the child—the role of provider—as well as an increase in the role as nurturer and socializer. The role model of an employed single mother can be either positive or negative, depending on factors such as her attitude toward the job and her success in integrating family and work roles (Baruch, 1972; L. Hoffman, 1989). Mothers who are satisfied with their jobs are important role models. Girls living with single mothers may perceive participation in different roles as both positive and viable, on the basis of the modeling they observe by their mothers. A single mother who copes well with employment models independence and positive participation in the work role. That modeling may contribute to her daughter's awareness of the nontraditional options that are available. Conversely, a mother who is in a lower status or lower paying job than she could be, or who experiences work overload and strain, may present a model to be avoided, thereby providing her daughter with the incentive to work toward a more prestigious or higher-paying job (Parsons, Frieze, Ruble, & Croke, 1978).

Daughters with mothers working in nontraditional jobs are significantly more likely themselves to aspire to such jobs (Shapiro & Crowley, 1982). Brooks (1984) has suggested that girls need the following two kinds of role models when considering different career options: women in nontraditional occupations, and women successfully integrating family and work. This framework assumes that women typically integrate family plans into their career plans. The nontraditional involvement in work and not marriage presented by single mothers provides daughters with an alternate possibility, that is, that commitment to the labor force without the integration of the marital role is a viable option.

In addition to providing a model to daughters, single employed mothers may influence their sons' attitudes about appropriate adult roles for men and women. Sons of divorced mothers may perceive different roles as appropriate for themselves and their spouses than sons from intact families. Not only do they observe their mother in the traditionally male role of provider but these boys are also more likely to participate in traditionally female-typed household tasks themselves (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981).

This section has shown that maternal employment is related to family structure, and we proposed that it may affect both daughters and sons through its impact on maternal time allocation and the model the mother provides for her children. The following section focuses on the evidence for relationships between maternal employment and child achievement and aspirations and, where evidence is available, discusses the combination of maternal employment status and family structure.

Relation of maternal employment to outcomes. There are some similarities in the maternal employment literature and the divorce literature. First, as in the case of divorce, there has often been an assumption that having a working mother is bad, despite the fact that there is no conclusive evidence that maternal employment itself is harmful to children—it may in fact have a positive impact on some children.

In considering how maternal employment may affect adolescents' aspirations, it is important to evaluate its effect on academic performance. In her review of the effects of maternal employment on achievement, Heynes (1982) concluded that there is very little difference between children of employed and nonemployed mothers and that the outcomes are related to other mediating variables, such as income and family stress. In addition, there are mixed effects of maternal employment on children, depending on the socioeconomic status of the family and the age and sex of the child (Heynes & Catsambis, 1986; L. Hoffman, 1980; Lerner & Hess, 1988). Consistently, in poor families, maternal employment is related to higher achievement (Heynes, 1982). Thus, maternal employment may be related to academic performance differences for some children, but this relationship is influenced by a number of other factors.

Studies of maternal participation in the labor force suggest that boys may be more susceptible to negative outcomes, perhaps because sons have been shown to have somewhat more stressful relations with parents and siblings when their mothers are employed (Montemayor, 1984). Negative effects for boys are not found across all socioeconomic groups. They appear to be more marked in middle-class families than in lower-class families (L. Hoffman, 1980), perhaps because the additional income brought in by the mothers is relatively more beneficial to the lower-class families (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1982). Nevertheless, even for the middle-class sons, the effects are quite small and vary depending on the outcome measure used.

Maternal employment is also likely to influence gender-role beliefs, which in turn should affect occupational values and goals. Gender-role attitudes of children with employed mothers may be less traditional than those with nonemployed mothers, and this difference may result in less gender-role stereotyped occupational aspirations and anticipated future family roles. In support of this idea, adolescents and children from intact families whose mothers were employed full-time have been found to manifest less extreme gender-role stereotyping, describing the traits of boys and girls more similarly and perceiving their parents as behaving more similarly in household activities (Gold & Andres, 1978a, 1978b). In addition, daughters of employed mothers have been shown to be more likely to view male-dominated occupations as open to both sexes (Bacon & Lerner, 1975). Both adolescents and adults from dual-career families also have more egalitarian gender-role attitudes and greater preferences for dual-career families than those with mothers not employed in the labor force (Powell & Steelman, 1982; Stephan & Corder, 1985; Vogel, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1970).

The mother's attitude toward work has an important influence on the impact of her employment on her family (Baruch, 1972; Galambos, Petersen, & Lenerz, 1987; Gold & Andres, 1978b; L. Hoffman, 1974, 1989). Although, in general, being employed and occupying multiple roles has a positive effect on mothers' well-being (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Menaghan, 1989), being satisfied with one's job and having a good quality job are strong predictors of well-being (Baruch & Barnett, 1987; Coverman, 1989). Therefore, in addition to gathering data on employment status, it is important to consider how satisfied mothers are with their jobs and whether this attitude is related to family structure. If a mother has to work for financial survival, she may feel more negative about her job. Conversely, she may develop an increased sense of self-sufficiency and esteem and may be less likely to feel guilty about working because her income is essential.

These studies suggest that mothers' working status can affect both children's school achievement and their educational and occupational aspirations. Because family structure is related to mothers' working status, the effects of changing family structure may be mediated by changing maternal work status or by maternal employment taking on a different meaning in single-mother families. To assess this hypothesis, one needs to look at the impact of both influences simultaneously. Unfortunately, the effects of combining single parenting and maternal employment have not been adequately investigated. Very few studies address the conjoint effects of family structure and maternal participation in the labor market, and those that do report conflicting results. Kinard and Reinherz (1986) found no main effect of maternal employment and no interaction with marital disruption on reading or math achievement in third- and fourth-grade children. In a low-income sample of young children, Cherry and Eaton (1977) found positive effects of maternal employment in two-parent families on cognitive performance, but no cognitive benefits of maternal employment in single-mother families. Other studies have found that the negative effects of divorce are reduced if the mother has a job prior to the divorce, presumably because this situation requires that the family make one less adjustment and thus should lead to less disruption to existing household routines. Alternatively, it could result from the fact that income loss is likely to be less extreme if the mother is already employed at the time of divorce (Hetherington et al., 1982; Kinard & Reinherz, 1984).

Especially rare are studies of the impact of maternal employment and single parenting on adolescents. In Rosenthal and Hansen (1981), maternal employment made no difference for young adolescents in school achievement, self-concept, or occupational aspirations, and there was no interaction of maternal employment and divorce. Other research has found positive effects of full-time maternal employment on self-esteem for adolescents with single mothers but not for those in two-parent families (Duckett & Richards, 1989). Milne et al. (1986) reported negative effects of maternal employment (retrospectively measured) on adolescents' school achievement, but this study has been strongly criticized for its sampling and analysis deficiencies (Heynes & Catsambis, 1986), thus it is impossible to know what to conclude from the findings.

In their reviews of the effects of maternal employment on mother–child relationships, Piotrkowski and Katz (1982) and Spitze (1988) emphasize the need for more comparative research on the impact of employment on single versus married mothers and their families. Maternal employment might affect different processes in single- and two-parent families. For example, occupying multiple roles may have different meaning for divorced mothers. Although multiple roles can help to buffer stress in nondivorced women (Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985), Piotrkowski and Katz (1982) suggested the following three aspects of multiple roles that may pose different types of problems for women: demands on time, demands on physical energy, and demands on psychological energy. The time and energy demands of multiple roles appear to enhance women's role satisfaction without increasing stress in two-parent families (Coverman, 1989). However, single mothers may be more susceptible to negative costs of role conflict because they have fewer economic resources than married mothers and are less able to either share or purchase support services.

Summary. Maternal employment has become a normative experience for adolescents, but its effect on the family environment may vary across family structure. The nature of single parenting requires that the mother work outside the home for the financial survival of her family. Whether single mothers' employment affects child and adolescent development (negatively or positively) should depend on other factors such as its impact on the mothers' available time and energy and its impact on the type of role models provided for the children (see Figure 1). Both of these possible mediators, in turn, should be

influenced by a host of other variables such as maternal job satisfaction, income, type of job, amount of employment, and meaning of employment to the mother. Each of these variables may interact with marital status and changes in marital status in their impact on children. The mediating role of maternal employment between family structure and adolescent outcomes is an area that needs further attention in divorce research. Research addressing these issues should consider maternal attitudes and the characteristics of her job as well as employment status. How maternal employment and family structure interact in their impact on achievement, aspirations, and values will be important to the understanding of the long-term influence of living with a single mother. Even more important for this understanding will be longitudinal studies of the relationship between changes in family structure and maternal employment and of how various patterns of change might affect child and adolescent development.

Family Processes

Family processes have been examined in a number of ways. For this article, discussion is limited to those areas most closely linked to the dynamics associated with the distribution of power and responsibility in the family (e.g., family decision making, parental discipline style, and family responsibility allocation). These areas are discussed because they are likely to be different in various family configurations and to influence adolescent aspirations. For example, in two-parent families, both adults can collaborate on, and reinforce each other's decisions about, rules and discipline, and both can share economic and domestic responsibilities. Following divorce, however, families experience a shift in the authority structure. Financial and household responsibilities are redistributed and, because there is only one adult in the family, the single mother must rely on her children's cooperation in a number of daily chores. The increase in responsibility may lead to a greater opportunity for the child to assume some control in the family decision-making process. Children in single-mother homes who participate in many required household tasks, and who have more household responsibility, may have more control in negotiations over rules. In partial support of this idea, adolescents, especially boys, in single-mother-headed families report experiencing greater parental permissiveness in several areas of decision making and less parental control (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Flanagan, 1986; Hetherington, 1989; Steinberg, 1987).

This greater responsibility and input into decision making may have either positive or negative consequences, depending on its timing, its magnitude, and its embeddedness in a laissez-faire versus authoritative family climate. If it is too early for the child's level of maturity, and if part of a laissez-faire or detached family environment, increased autonomy may lead to negative outcomes because it puts too much pressure on the child or because it can be associated with inadequate supervision, increased susceptibility to peer pressure, and tendencies toward delinquent behavior (Dornbusch et al., 1985). If the increased responsibility and decreased parental control are timed correctly and are embedded in a warm, authoritative family environment, they can have positive consequences associated with increased self-esteem and confidence. If children of single mothers perceive themselves to have greater personal strengths, they may also be more likely to value and aspire to higher status occupations that allow for greater autonomy. This should be especially important for female adolescents who are less likely than their male peers to aspire to such occupations and who are more often overprotected than adolescents in two-parent families (L. Hoffman, 1980).

Impact of divorce on distribution of family responsibilities. The children and adolescents who live in single-mother-headed households may be asked to participate more in household maintenance tasks (Weiss, 1979). When the mother works, she needs the help of her children to complete domestic tasks such as meal preparation, cleaning, and laundry. In support of this hypothesis, Timmer, Eccles, and O'Brien (1985) found slight differences between family types, with children of single mothers being more likely to help with housework on weekends. Colletta (1979b) found that low-income single mothers received more help with household work than middle-income single mothers, and that the help came from their children.

Does this increased involvement in family maintenance affect the developing child's sense of confidence and self-sufficiency as predicted earlier? Not many studies have tested this causal link directly, but several have compared children from different family structures and the results are consistent with the positive model outlined earlier. Weiss (1985) found that adolescents feel more self-sufficient and responsible in single-mother families. They have skills not developed by their peers in intact families. Some even see children in two-parent homes as being pampered. In Csikszentmihalyi and Larson's (1984) detailed description of 75 adolescents, those in one-parent families rated themselves as more free, skilled, and strong than those in two-parent families. In a similar vein, adolescents with divorced parents feel more self-reliant (Reinhard, 1977) and perceive that they have acquired personal strengths and responsibilities in the course of adjusting to divorce (Dunlop & Burns, 1988; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980). Finally, girls from divorced families have also been shown to be higher on internal locus of control (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985), which may be a result of feelings of proficiency gained from family responsibilities.

In addition to domestic responsibilities, outside employment and financial contribution to the family may be more likely in single-mother families. The adolescent work experience may be different in these families, especially as it relates to the interaction of family members and the meaning of the work to the individual and the family. The lower resources in single-mother homes may lead to the mother promoting greater independence by asking the child to get a job to help cover family expenses. Consequently, the money earned may be placed to different use than money earned by adolescents in two-parent homes. Usually, working adolescents pay more of their own expenses than their nonworking peers, but save very little for their future (Greenberger, 1986; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Contributions to family finances are rare, but children of single mothers may be more likely to participate in their own support, perhaps buying more of their own clothes, saving money for their education, or giving money to the family. If they make this kind of contribution, these youth may consider themselves, and be considered, more centrally responsible in the family. As a result, they may demand and receive more

input into the decision-making process. This role of employment in adolescent development may be comparable with that discussed by Elder in his studies of the Depression. He found that when economic hardship in the family lead to boys' employment, it resulted in greater independence and lower parental control (Elder, 1974).

Link between family processes and outcomes. In conducting research on divorce effects, it is important to remember that processes such as parental control, discipline, responsibility allocation, and decision-making styles may be related to family structure. In turn, these family processes can influence outcomes posited to be more negative in divorced families, such as school performance and adjustment (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Kurdek, 1987), or those considered to be more positive, such as independence and self-esteem (Weiss, 1985). Thus, there could be both positive and negative effects of family structure change on children's self-concept and behavior because the effect is mediated by the family process variables outlined earlier. Process variables themselves can have positive or negative effects, depending on their nature and on the timing of change in them within the family. The timing issue can be especially important during adolescence, when decision-making processes normally are being renegotiated by parents and children.

A confound of these processes and family structure may result in attribution of an outcome to family structure effects that is actually mediated by responsibility allocation or decision-making style. For example, early adolescents from highly authoritarian homes have been found to have lower self-esteem (Yee & Flanagan, 1985), and those from homes with high autonomy, low punishment, and high household responsibility were found to be generally high in self-esteem and independence (Amato, 1986). To the extent that children in single-mother families have more or less input than those in two-parent families in the decision-making process, their self-esteem should be relatively enhanced or reduced (all else being equal). These differences in self-esteem should then be considered a result of family process differences mediating the relationship between family structure and self-esteem, and not simply divorce effects. In a similar manner, employment has been found to increase adolescent girls' autonomy and their intrinsic occupational values (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, Ruggiero, & Vaux, 1982). If children of single mothers are more likely to be employed, their work experience may play a mediating role between family structure and occupational and educational values.

In research examining the mediating role of family processes on divorce effects, Steinberg (1987) found that adolescents living with single mothers were more susceptible to peer pressure than adolescents in intact families. This effect of family structure change on self-reports of susceptibility to peer pressure was reduced when a measure of the decision-making opportunities available to the adolescent was included as a covariate in analyses. Conversely, family decision-making practices do not always account for the differences between children in single-parent families and those who live with both biological parents. Dornbusch and his colleagues (1985) reported that family structure and family decision making both make independent contributions to adolescent deviance, and the impact of family structure on deviance of adolescent males is hardly affected by controlling for family decision-making style.

Summary. Decision-making practices, parental control, and responsibility distribution have been found to differ across family type in some studies, but given the number of important confounds or moderator variables and the sparsity of data on these issues, it is difficult to draw a conclusion about general differences in family types. Nonetheless, the evidence is strong enough that the mediating role of these processes needs to be carefully studied. Based on past research that links these processes and child self-concept and behavior, it is reasonable to predict that they might have a mediating role between family structure and adolescent occupational aspirations, but this prediction has not been tested.

Parental Expectations

Another factor that is likely to influence children's educational and vocational outcomes is parental expectations (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982). In this section, we discuss two different kinds of expectations, as follows: (a) specific expectancies for school and academic performance and (b) general expectancies and aspirations for the child's future. The first includes parents' assessment of the likelihood of specific immediate consequences of the divorce for their children's level of academic competence, whereas the second includes parents' more general long-term socialization goals and values they hope to transmit to their children.

The beliefs that a parent holds about a child's ability and the accompanying expectations for that child's future success or failure in different domains could be important mediators of family structure effects. Expectations about what is likely to happen to one's child may change in the face of the stress accompanying divorce and the dramatic income fluctuations associated with marital dissolution. As discussed earlier, single mothers have less time to help with schoolwork and therefore may adjust their goals downward to reflect what they consider to be reachable limits for their children, given the family's new resources and stresses. Single mothers have been found to have slightly lower expectations for their children's school performance (Barber, 1987; Barber & Eccles, 1991; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988). Consistent with the idea that this decline reflects the mother's adaptation to losses in family resources, the difference in expectations disappears when income is statistically controlled (Barber, 1987).

One can also conceptualize parents' expectations in terms of parents' hopes or goals for optimal future outcomes. These aspirations may also change following divorce. Because of the dramatic loss in income and short-term drop in the children's school achievement that often accompany divorce, a mother's general aspirations for her children's educational and occupational attainment may decrease initially following the divorce. This decline is likely to relate to the mother's awareness of the economic and psychological difficulties to be faced by her family in the near future. For example, single mothers may lower their educational goals for their children because they think they will be unable to support college attendance. In support of this hypothesis, Kriesberg (1970) reported that single mothers

were slightly less likely to aspire to more than a high school education for their children than their married counterparts. Once again, however, this difference disappeared when income was controlled, suggesting that single mothers whose financial resources compare favorably with those of married couples would not have lower educational goals. Nevertheless, a real test of this hypothesis would require the demonstration that mothers' expectations and aspirations *decline* in response to the *decline* in family income that often accompanies divorce. Controlling for post-divorce income without taking into account pre-divorce income makes it impossible to know whether the income effects reflect pre-existing cultural differences or post-divorce adjustment. However, to date, no studies have looked at this more complex pattern of associations.

In contrast, rather than lowering career aspirations following divorce, some mothers could adjust their aspirations for their children's futures upward, assigning new values to competing goals. The process of adjusting to being a single parent and having primary responsibility for supporting a household alone might lead divorced mothers to reconsider the importance of being financially independent. This, in turn, could lead them to reassess the value they attach to various work and family roles and to the adolescent experiences that prepare children to fulfill these various roles. For example, single mothers may place increased value on academic performance and aspire to more education for their children, particularly if they themselves have faced difficulties in the labor market because of limited education or training. In support of this idea, employed single mothers were found to be more likely to have higher aspirations about grades in school than married mothers (Kriesberg, 1970).

In a similar vein, there is some evidence that marital disruption decreases the traditionality of mothers' attitudes toward the integration of work and family roles. Brown and Manela (1978) found that women whose attitudes originally covered a range of positions on traditional sex-role attitudes became more nontraditional during the divorce process. Changes in these gender-stereotyped beliefs could lead single divorced mothers to change the explicit socialization messages they provide to their adolescents about the value of various future work and family roles. In support of this prediction, divorced mothers have been shown to place less importance than married mothers on their adolescents' future participation in spousal and marital roles (Barber, 1990). Given this lower value for family involvement, divorced mothers of girls may communicate aspirations for higher status occupations to encourage financial independence in adulthood. Longitudinal data comparing these maternal values and aspirations in different family structures are not available, and research is needed to examine how these values might change following divorce.

Link between parental expectations and outcomes. One way in which divorce may prove to be particularly damaging is through its effect on parental expectations for school achievement. Parental expectations have been shown to be important predictors of children's academic performance (Parsons et al., 1982). If single mothers believe the widespread oversimplification of research findings stating that single parenting is detrimental to children, they may develop lower expectations for their own child's performance and educational attainment. These lowered expectations could then lead to a decline in academic performance, playing a mediating role between divorce and children's lower achievement outcomes. In support of this hypothesis, Barber and Eccles (1991) have shown that lower maternal expectations for mathematics performance mediated the relationship between family structure and mathematics aptitude scores.

In turn, lower achievement could influence the choice of occupations that the child considers realistically attainable. Considering that lower performance can preclude participation in many higher status, male-dominated professions, expectations for performance declines could discourage adolescents (particularly girls) from aspiring to those careers. Thus, decreased parental expectations for achievement could affect the occupational attainment of their children.

The second outcome in the model that may be affected by parental expectations is the child's self-concept. On the one hand, higher parental expectations may lead to enhanced confidence and self-esteem (Parsons et al., 1982) and, conversely, lower expectations could lead to reduced self-esteem. As discussed earlier, there is some evidence that divorced mothers have lower academic expectations for their children. Thus, divorce could lead to lowered self-esteem if it leads to lowered parental expectations. On the other hand, the impact of divorce on parents' expectations regarding their children's maturity could lead to an increase in self-esteem. For example, parents convey their expectations for their children's competence and independence through the allocation of responsibility, which may in turn help the children to develop a stronger sense of competence. As discussed in the preceding section, single mothers often provide their children with greater autonomy and responsibility, and children in these families have been found to have greater self-efficacy.

To the extent that they influence self-confidence and independence, higher maternal expectations could contribute to girls' plans to pursue nontraditional careers. One could also predict that girls with high self-esteem would be more willing to risk crossing traditional societal boundaries than girls with low self-esteem. To the extent that they feel sure of their own ability to work independently, higher status jobs with greater autonomy would be appropriate career choices. In support of this hypothesis, Nevill and Schlecker (1988) found that strong self-efficacy and assertiveness were related to undergraduate women's willingness to engage in a nontraditional occupation.

In addition to achievement and self-concept, another specific outcome for which parents' expectations may be important is in the development of traditional gender-role related values and plans regarding the integration of family and occupation. Divorced mothers have been shown to have less traditional gender-role beliefs, and those beliefs have been found to mediate a positive relationship between divorce and egalitarian gender-role beliefs in adolescents (Barber, 1990). Because gender-role beliefs are important in the development of career and family plans (Eccles, 1987), differential socialization of gender roles in intact and divorced families could have an impact on occupational aspirations.

Attitudes of significant others such as parents or teachers

have been posited as important for career choice (e.g., Eccles [Parsons] et al., 1983; Hotchkiss & Borow, 1984). For the occupational domain, a mother's transmission of nontraditional values could prove advantageous, especially for girls aspiring to achieve financial independence. Girls whose mothers do not express expectations that their daughters marry, or who expect their daughters to delay marriage, may be more likely to consider nontraditional careers because they would not anticipate having to allocate as much time to domestic roles. Because male-dominated occupations frequently demand greater time commitments, girls who do not anticipate integrating family and work roles may be more likely to aspire to nontraditional careers (Eccles, 1987). In this context, our model examines the long-term impact of living with a single mother in a framework that allows for positive interpretations of nontraditional values.

Summary. Thus, parental expectations for children's achievement, as well as values for future occupational attainment and family roles, are likely to be different in various family types. Divorced mothers may respond to media reports of the negative impact of marital dissolution and reduce their expectations for school performance. At the same time, they may increase their emphasis on financial independence and occupational attainment and decrease their expectations for their children's marriage and parenting commitments on the basis of their own experiences. These differences in expectations may in turn play important roles in the development of their children's academic performance, self-concept, and gender-role values. Research is needed to investigate whether parental expectations and aspirations in single-mother families mediate divorce effects on children's aspirations and values through their influence in these three areas.

Conclusion

In summary, past research that has focused on the negative outcomes of divorce has been inconclusive. Although there seem to be some small differences between children in divorced and intact families in cognitive performance, delinquency, and self-esteem, these differences frequently disappear when confounding and mediating variables are controlled. The research on children of divorce is frequently flawed by serious methodological problems, reducing the generalizability of findings and leading to the possibility that the negative outcomes attributed to divorce may, in fact, be due to economic struggle or parent conflict.

In the second part of this article we presented a model of the possible influences of family structure on adolescent identity development in educational and occupational contexts and on gender-role values related to marriage, family, and job plans. Maternal employment, family processes, and parental expectations were hypothesized to have important mediating roles in the relationship between family structure and adolescent outcomes.

Although it may be generally true that two parents can do a better job of raising children than one parent, it does not follow that all children are better off if their parents stay together. First, the negative consequences of being raised in a conflictual family may be averted if the parents separate. Second, there may be some advantages to the socialization experienced by children growing up with their single mothers. Children in single-parent, female-headed families may develop a greater sense of personal responsibility and self-esteem, and girls and boys may develop less gender-role stereotyped occupational aspirations and family values, which could lead to their increased success in the labor market.

Research on divorce must go beyond the tradition of searching for negative outcomes and must continue to improve on the methods commonly used to investigate the impact of living with a single mother. Increased attention should be focused on normal development in different family types and on the processes that both positively and negatively influence adjustment to family transitions. A better understanding of these processes could help to dispel widespread inaccurate beliefs that divorce is always detrimental to children and to provide parents, teachers, counselors, and therapists with a more positive framework from which to meet the needs of all children.

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