Gender gap in repartnering: the role of children
Evidence from the UK

Alessandro Di Nallo

Abstract

I present an in-depth analysis of the role of parenthood and children's living arrangements on new union formation of men and women in the UK. Using two cohorts datasets, Understanding Society, which provide full retrospective information on unions and births up to age 55, I run discrete-time event history models combined with a multilevel approach to estimate gender differences in repartnering probability. I find evidence that the gender gap in new partnership formation is significantly but not entirely driven by parenthood, that is, fathers repartner more likely than mothers and childless men are still marginally more likely to find a partner than childless women. Further, I find that parent-child coresidence slows down the repartnering process of mothers and, to a lesser extent, fathers. However, this relationship tends to disappear only for fathers if custodial children are very young.

1. Introduction

The rise in cohabitation, divorce and separation, coupled with the growing frequency of repartnering, has determined a higher diversity in the partnering trajectories in the United Kingdom such as in most European Countries. Therefore, the likelihood of experiencing a new partnership and childbearing in higher-order unions has increased substantially over the past decades for men as well as for women (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009): people search for a partner in a wider spectrum of ages and after their first partnership experience, and re-enter the marriage market consisting of a pool of singles with diverse relationship histories (Poortman, 2007).

In demography, most studies have investigated the repartnering behaviour from women's perspective (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). Interestingly, the paths of entry into first union and parenthood differ by gender (Dworak & Toulemon, 2007), but a greater difference is reported for repartnering after union dissolution (e.g, Bernhardt & Goldscheider, 2002; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Shafer, 2013), possibly due to gender differences in parental custody (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006), and cultural factors (Ivanova et al., 2013).

This study investigates the repartnering probabilities of men and women from age 18 to 55 in the UK, with a specific focus on parenthood status. In addition, two other factors, such as living arrangements and children's age, will be included in the analysis to single out the role of parents' obligations towards children from that of parenthood per se on repartnering chances.

Past research documented that children from prior relationships lower mothers' chances of forming new cohabiting (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006) and marital partnerships (Wu & Schimmele, 2005), as opposed to childless women. Children born from prior unions are likely to affect women's subsequent chances of new unions, as post-separation obligations to children may make mothers more cautious about new relationships. Following the same line of reasoning, the childrearing responsibilities deriving from parenthood may constrain the new partnership chances of fathers vis-à-vis childless men. However, the evidence for children's influence on the repartnering process of men is limited and inconsistent, as a consequence of men's diverse response to paternity (Lewis, 2000; Kiernan, 2006): only custodial fathers assume intensive day-to-day childcaring while the involvement of non-resident fathers may range from regular visits and economic contributions to radical detachment (Kiernan, 2006).

Drawing on data from Understanding Society, I seek to address three main research questions. First, I document whether and to what extent repartnering chances of men and women differ and whether the parenthood might explain the gender gap. Second, I investigate whether parenthood *per se* or custodial parenthood (the presence of children in the same household as their parents) influence fathers and mothers' chances of new unions. Third, I evaluate whether the presence of young children constitute a constraint to repartnering and if it differently affects men and women.

There is little evidence on how parenthood, family background and current life course factors influence men and women's propensity to form new partnerships in Britain. Previous evidence for the UK has focussed on women's new union formation after marital disruption and has provided only qualitative evidence for men (Lampard & Peggs, 1999). In contrast with most studies that concentrate on a single transition to new union, I analyse to the full partnership history of individuals from age 18 to 55, by using an event-history analysis with a multilevel approach.

The investigation of the influence of parenthood on new union formation is relevant for several reasons. First, union dissolution hampers individuals' well-being with more serious effect for parents who generally report lower adjustment than childless counterparts (Tavares & Aassve, 2013), while the presence of a new partner has been shown to be correlated with psychological adjustment after a union dissolution (e.g. Wang & Amato, 2000).

Second, as more individuals experience a sequence of relationships ("conjugal succession", Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984), they also tend to repartner in complex family settings, such as stepfamilies, either bringing their biological children in the new union or becoming step-fathers of partners' biological children. Recent figures show the preponderance of custodial mothers over custodial fathers: 86% of stepfamily households in the UK have children from a woman's previous marriage/cohabitation (stepfather households), and 11% have children on father's side (stepmother households), while 3% feature children from both partners' previous marriage/cohabitation (Fido, et al. 2006; Smith, 2008). The gender gap in parental custody of children also mirrors the divergence in parent-child attachment after a union dissolution. A sizeable minority of fathers, amounting to around 15%, is non-resident already at the time of childbirth (Kiernan & Smith, 2006) and around 30 per cent of non-resident fathers lose contact altogether with their children after partnership end (Peacy & Hunt, 2008). These findings seem to support the hypothesis that non-resident fathers are more prone to retreat from their parental responsibilities than non-resident mothers, as they move out (Kiernan, 2006) and assume family obligations with another partner (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001).

Further, the "incomplete institution" of complex families, where parents assume multiple and not clearly defined roles (Cherlin, 1992), has been indicated as a cause for poorer family functioning (Brown & Manning, 2009), unequal division of resources between co-residential (step and biological) children and non-residential children (Hofferth & Andersson, 2003), and happiness and self-esteem of co-resident children (Robson, 2010).

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 summarises and assesses the evidence concerning the repartnering process, with a focus on the influence of children, and illustrate the original contribution of this study. Section 3 states and motivates the research questions that are tested in the analysis. Section 4 describes the sample derived from the British studies and Section 5 illustrates the statistical methodology. Results are presented and commented in section 6. The conclusions summarise the main findings of this study and describes its limitations.

2. Literature review

Empirical evidence has shown that men's re-mating process differs from that of women (Wu and Schimmele 2005). Men find a partner more likely than women on the repartnering market (e.g. Haskey, 1999), with shorter spells between two consecutive cohabiting/marital unions (e.g., Coleman et al. 2000; de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003; Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2008; Poortman 2007; Wu and Schimmele 2005).

According to the theories of partnership formation (Becker, 1981; Oppenheimer, 1988), the repartnering process differs between men and women because of gender-driven constraints and preferences in the search for a new partner. Theoretical explanations for mothers' lower chances of union formation have proposed a diverse range of socio-demographic factors. Nevertheless, parenthood results the key factor for intra-gender (mother vs. childless women) and inter-gender (mothers vs. fathers) differentials (Glick, 1984; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003; Poortman 2007; Wu and Schimmele 2005, Lampard & Peggs, 1999). Mothers are significantly less likely to repartner than childless women (Bernhardt & Goldscheider, 2002; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Steele et al., 2006; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Beaujouan, 2012; Lampard & Peggs, 1999). Also, women with dependent children have lower odds of first marriage (e.g. Bennett, Bloom and Miller, 1995), remarriage (e.g. Wu & Schimmele, 2005) and cohabitation (Desrosiers and Le Bourdais, 1993)**.** This evidence is more apparent for women with a large number of children and with young children (Ivanova et al., 2013; Poortman, 2007) and for women with non-marital first birth (Upchurch, Lillard & Panis, 1993).

There are far fewer studies analysing how fatherhood influences men's new union prospects. Nevertheless, the existing evidence does not show any consistent gap in new union formation between childless men and fathers: under certain circumstances, fathers are more likely to enter a union than childless men, as they seem to advertise themselves as more reliable partners (Wu & Schimmele, 2005); other studies have found no or non-significant difference in partnering probabilities of fathers versus childless men on union formation (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Sweeney, 1997; Ivanova, Kalmijn, & Uunk, 2013; Skew, Evans, & Gray, 2009).

3. Research questions

Several explanations have been used to portrait the role of children in the process of repartnering and the differential effect between men and women: opportunity, attractiveness, need (Becker, 199; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Ivanova et al., 2013).

The first argument points out that the financial commitment and time dedication required by a child reduces a parent's opportunities to find a new partner (Koo et al., 1984). The daily caring of children – especially in the early stages of their lives[1] (e.g, Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2009; Hosking, Whitehouse, & Baxter, 2010) – constrains parents' social life and limit their time to meet new partners (Koo et al., 1984; Lampard & Peggs, 1999). This effect is likely to be gender-specific since mothers are far more likely than men to live with their children and, thus, are more prone to bear the burden of daily childcare. This reasoning applies, to a smaller extent, also to the non-resident parents who are emotionally bound to their children: parents, particularly fathers, who live away from their children, may provide their non-resident children with allegiances and might visit them on a regular basis. Lampard & Peggs (1999) suggest that the visitation schedule of separated parents can conflict with the new partner whereas Harknett & Knab (2007) argue that childcare maintenance can retain them from planning a new union, and a new family.

The second argument holds that having a child decreases one's attractiveness to new potential partners. The existence of a child from prior union is a source of tension in a couple (MJ Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006) as it signals the contact with the former partner (Monte, 2007). Also, a new partner may feel reluctant to form a union with a custodial parent because of the stress or the stigma associated with the stepparent role (Manning, Smock, & Stewart, 2003). Again, the influence of children on parents' attractiveness is gender-driven. Previous studies on the mating process reveal asymmetric gender preferences: women are more inclined to form unions with partners who have had children than men are (South, 1991; Bernhardt & Goldscheider, 2002). This inclination might also hint that women's childcare involvement is less dependent on genetic inheritance than men's (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Waynforth, 2013). However, this effect may foster the repartnering chances of custodial fathers only (the "good father effect"), as they show commitment to their children's care and convey a message of dependability in a prospective family (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006; Lappegård & Rønsen, 2013). Conversely, child custody does not benefit mothers in the "remarriage market" since their involvement in childcare is considered normative.

[1] At age 0-3, childcare activities mainly consist of assistance - such as feeding and cuddling the baby; at ages 3-6 they shift to more nurturing and time-consuming practices, such as reading and playing with their children (Huerta et al., 2013).

The third argument underlines that different factors might incentivise mothers and fathers to find a new partner. On the one hand, women are more severely affected by a union dissolution than men, especially if they have dependent children (Poortman, 2000). Searching for a partner might be one of the strategies that separated parents can apply to deal with a financial loss (Jansen, Wijckmans, & Bavel, 2009). This hypothesis conflicts with the evidence that separated mothers are less inclined to repartner as opposed to childless women, as they probably fear that a new partner may eventually interfere with their established childcare routine (Beaujouan, 2012). On the other hand, fathers with dependent children might purposely search for a new partner who could take on the role of stepmother, as they may need a surrogate of the maternal figure for their children's upbringing (Bernhardt & Goldscheider, 2002).

There is a tight relationship between the parent's gender and the presence of children in the same household, as dependent children are more likely to be living with the mother. Whether or not the gender gap in repartnering mirrors the imbalance of the gender of custodial parents is not completely clear as previous studies have applied different approaches and have some limitations. First, a few studies distinguish between coresidential and absent children as children are often assumed to be living elsewhere (Clarkberg et al., 1995; Sweeney, 1997; Poortman, 2007; Wu & Schimmele, 2005). Other studies addressing the residence status of children cannot identify their age and, hence, the level of paternal engagement with childcare (Sweeney, 1997; Ivanova et al., 2013; Beaujouan, 2012). This study includes a wider and more accurate array of information about children relative to previous studies: it examines the existence of prior children, their residence status, the presence of young co-resident children within the parent's household.

Second, past research variably interpreted the process of repartnering: most studies have focussed on the first spell of singlehood after marital dissolution (Sweeney, 1997; Ivanova et al., 2013) or after the first partnership breakup (Nock, 1998, Bernhardt & Goldscheider, 2002; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Skew et al., 2009; Beaujouan, 2012) whereas only one has analysed the multiple spells of singlehood in the life-course, but only in the selected sample of divorced people (Poortman, 2007). This study innovates the literature by taking into account all the types of cohabiting relationships (cohabitations and marriages) in a person's life course, until age 55. With a decline in first marriage rates, a raising prevalence of cohabitation for the never-married and the divorced, and an increase in out-of-wedlock births in the UK (Sigle-Rushton, 2008), it is important to include all the previous living arrangements in the analysis of partnership reformation. Further, this study simultaneously estimates the chances of forming first, second and higher order unions, using event history models combined with a multilevel approach. This approach brings two advantages. First, this study can identify the influence of previous partnerships on new unions and disentangle the role of prior children from that of past partnerships, by looking at the whole number of relationships. The number of cohabiting relationships is positively associated with the risk of having children; however, the accumulation of partnerships and subsequent breakups has a negative consequence on further repartnering (Poortman, 2007). Therefore, this analysis can net out the (generally) negative influence of previous partnerships on repartnering from the role of children. Second, this model tackles possible self-selection on unmeasured characteristics associated with multiple union entries and exits: it assumes that the episodes of singlehood are *not* independent and are associated through individuals' unobservable traits, such as having preferences for mating or possessing attractive characteristics. For instance, individuals may prefer cohabiting rather than marrying, as they are more inclined to relationship hopping; or, those who have children from prior unions may put greater emphasis on family values and be more exposed to the risk of repartnering.

Other elements of individuals' biography will enter the analysis of the repartnering. According to the life course approach (Elder, 1985), life transitions, such as the repartnering process, can be better understood in the light of a person's previous partnerships and family context.

In keeping with one previous study (Poortman, 2007), this analysis will exploit full information about partnership history. Three characteristics of the previous unions could influence the probability of repartnering. Firstly, a previous marriage (as opposed to a cohabitation) brings a higher level of emotional attachment to former partner (Nock, 1995) and may lead to more cautious attitudes toward a new union. Further, the emotional distress following a divorce is likely to be greater than that of separation as married people are more engaged in shared activities and more hardly adjust to a new routine as single (Tavares & Aassve, 2014). Further, the number of previous unions is negatively related with a person's motivation to enter a new union: a series of breakdowns would make a person less risk-taking towards a new union (Van Hoorn, 2000) and would be interpreted by potential partner as a negative signal of partnership commitment (Lappegård & Rønsen, 2013). Eventually, the duration of previous relationships may signal two countervailing influences on repartering: on the one hand, longer relationships would signify a greater attachment to the previous partner and weaken the preference for a new union (see above); on the other hand, longer durations may unveil a stronger preference for stable relationships and, hence, lead to a more rapid repartnering (Bumpass et al., 1995; Poortman, 2007).

Family structure influences intergenerational associations in partnership instability. Prior research suggest that family disruption by the teenage years may affect individuals' ability to form new stable relationships in adulthood (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Kiernan 1992; Dearden et al. 1994). Also, parents' socio-economic background might affect partnership habits through its influence on beliefs towards partnerships and family issues (Axinn & Thornton, 1992).

The literature has also identified a number of socio-demographic factors associated with union formation and paternity. Age establishes the individual's pool of eligible partners in the remarriage market (Bumpass et al., 1990) and it is negatively associated with the likelihood and the speed of new partnerships, although this decline is less sharp for men than for women (Beaujouan, 2012; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Poortman, 2007; Lampard & Peggs, 1999).

While the life course perspective stresses the relevance of personal past trajectories, empirical evidence also suggests that socio-economic conditions and educational attainment could have affect mating choices. Men and women with more precarious job patterns are more prone to experiencing unstable partnership patterns (Blackwell and Lichter, 2004) and men with socio-economic disadvantage are deterred from assuming paternal responsibilities (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2004; Forste, 2002). Educational qualification influences partnership formation (e.g. Winkler-Dworak & Toulemon, 2007) but it is unclear how high education is linked to new union formation (Manning et al., 2003; Ivanova et al., 2013): although highly educated individuals have less chances of union dissolution (Matysiak, Styrc, & Vignoli, 2001), they might also be more likely to reform a new union when they return on the marriage market (Kaufman, 2000; Lappegaard & Ronsen, 2013).

In line with the arguments presented in the previous paragraphs, this paper addresses the influence of children on the repartnering process of men and women. First, I investigate whether parenthood *per se* is responsible for the gender gap in repartnering as earlier studies on different countries suggest. I estimate the probabilities of a transition to a new partnership for men and women, both in the full sample of singles and in the subsample of childless singles. The chances of entering in a new relationship should be gender neutral, if the chances of a new partnership were equal between men and women in the subsample of childless individuals.

Second, I examine whether and how parenthood influences to a different extent men and women, and if the residence status of children play a role in creating a gender gap. The considerations outlined above point out that parents living with dependent children might have lower chances of new partnership relative to non-resident parents and childless individuals because they have less opportunities to find a new partners, they appear less attractive for a prospective union and may feel less willing to start a new relationship. However, the negative effect hypothesised for co-resident children could be less strong for fathers who might appear more attractive on the remarriage market.

Third, I examine whether the age of the youngest co-resident child influences the chances of repartnering. This specification distinguishes between co-resident children aged 0-6, 7-13, and 13-18, as the literature on time allocation of childcare highlights a more time-consuming childcare for kids below this age threshold (e.g. Baxter, et al., 2013). I expect that single parents living with children below six may have fewer opportunities to find a partner either because they are more time-constrained and devoted to childrearing or because the potential partners may be wary of becoming stepparents.

4. Data

Understanding Society is used for this analysis. This study follows roughly 43,000 individuals born from the 1910s to 2000s and is representative of the UK population. It collects contemporary and retrospective events about work, partnership and fertility history. This analysis concentrates on life-course events of individuals born from the 1950s to the 1980s, up to the latest interview, or age 55, in case of the oldest individuals.

Fertility histories were derived from individuals' questionnaires in separate modules by dates. There is evidence that male cohort members tend to omit births that occurred before their first partnership or between two consecutive partnerships (Ann Berrington, 2004; Rendall, Clarke, & Peters, 1999), which may ultimately result in an underreporting of men's early and extra-marital fertility (Rendall, et al., 1999).

Table 1. Summary statistics per episodes of singlehood. Independent variable. Women.

	First episode	Second episode	Third episode	Fourth episode	Fifth episode	Total
Persons	*15,552*	*7,392*	*1,940*	*403*	*84*	
Ending in union	*12,935*	*4,505*	*927*	*168*	*31*	
Parenthood status						
Some children	*11.85%*	*63.49%*	*72.22%*	*72.70%*	*66.67%*	
Some co-resident children	*8.85%*	*57.31%*	*60.57%*	*58.81%*	*55.95%*	
Co-resident youngest child (<6 years)	*10.72%*	*28.26%*	*23.35%*	*19.85%*	*11.90%*	
Control variables						
Ever married		*57.43%*	*60.05%*	*67.49%*	*64.29%*	
Duration last union [a]		*60.87*	*43.02*	*31.53*	*40.12*	
Time since union [a] dissolution		*40.32*	*36.27*	*31.21*	*33.52*	
Age at union [a] dissolution		*26.23*	*31.23*	*34.23*	*35.66*	
Working	*0.49*	*0.53*	*0.59*	*0.67*	*0.63*	
Parents' separation						*0.12*
Father's low SES						*0.13*
Financial difficulty (before age 16)						*0.14*
Cohort						
1950		*24.46%*	*25.93%*	*26.05%*	*29.76%*	
1960		*32.90%*	*36.44%*	*43.92%*	*46.43%*	
1970		*26.84%*	*27.68%*	*24.32%*	*21.43%*	
1980		*14.49%*	*9.91%*	*5.71%*	*2.38%*	

Note: means are calculated over persons and refer to the first month of the episode. The first spell lasts from age 18 to the first union. The sample consists of single women, excluding union dissolution due to the death of the partner. "Co-residential" are those children who shared the household with their mothers in the first month after separation. Proportions are based on each category.

[a] Indicates median values (months)

Partnership histories are collected retrospectively at the first interview, carried out between 2009 and 2010. A partnership (cohabitation or marriage) is defined as such if individuals live together for a month or longer, so that non-coresidential partnerships are not reported in the records. In keeping with the literature on partnership formation and dissolution (e.g. Poortman, 2007; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Berrington & Diamond, 1999), the spells of marriage and cohabitation end when a cohort member stopped living together with the partner. Also, the definition of cohabiting relationship as "living together as a couple" rules out unions where partners spend their time together while not sharing the same house (Berrington & Diamond, 1999).

Table 2. Summary statistics per episodes of singlehood. Independent variable. Men.

	First episode	**Second episode**	**Third episode**	**Fourth episode**	**Fifth episode**	**Time-invariant**
Persons	*11,480*	*4,491*	*1,352*	*492*	*116*	
Ending in union	*10,770*	*3,262*	*869*	*222*	*52*	
Parenthood status						
Some children	*11.39%*	*52.57%*	*60.87%*	*66.43%*	*66.38%*	
Some co-resident children	*6.76%*	*17.26%*	*16,92%*	*13.72%*	*9.28%*	
Coresident youngest child (<6 years)	*5.38%*	*12.25%*	*10.56%*	*8.64%*	*3.64%*	
Control variables						
Ever married		*49.70%*	*46.82%*	*43.59%*	*44.38%*	
Duration last union [a]		*50.45*	*33.02*	*31.78*	*23.01*	
Time since last union [a] dissolution		*35.83*	*29.39*	*32.46*	*26.37*	
Age at last union dissolution [a]		*31.75*	*32.56*	*36.83*	*37.67*	
Working	*0.84*	*0.86*	*0.87*	*0.81*	*0.79*	
Parents' separation						*0.23*
Father's low SES						*0.14*
Financial difficulty (before age 16)						*0.15*
Cohort						
1950		*27.37%*	*28.70%*	*33.62%*	*41.74%*	
1960		*35.23%*	*40.53%*	*45.69%*	*42.14%*	
1970		*24.94%*	*24.04%*	*18.10%*	*12.90%*	
1980		*11.58%*	*6.73%*	*2.59%*	*3.23%*	

Note: means are calculated over persons and refer to the first month of the episode. The first spell lasts from age 18 to the first union. The sample consists of single men, excluding union dissolution due to the death of the partner. "Co-residential" are those children who shared the household with their fathers in the first month after separation. Proportions are based on each category.

[a] Indicates median values (months)

The dataset consists of the subsequent periods in which individuals are single ("singlehood"). The effective sample consists of men who were successfully interviewed in the first interview of Understanding Society, and reported at least one partnership dissolution. The number of individuals at risk of new unions consists of 15,552 women (Table 1) and 11,480 men (Table 2). The first episode of singlehood starts at age 18, while the second starts at the end of the first cohabitating union (whether cohabitation or marriage[2]), and ends with the month in which the second union was formed. Higher order spells begin after a union breakup and end with a new union or with the interview (censored spell)[3], if no other cohabiting/marital spell is reported. The episodes are pooled into one person-month dataset, so that subsequent episodes of singlehood are nested within the individuals. The periods of singlehood that started through partner death (N=46) were not considered.

5. Methods

I use Kaplan-Meier estimates and random-effect discrete time event history models for studying the probability of new partnership by the time since union dissolution for men and women. I employ a discrete time logistic model to estimate for each individual i the odds of experiencing a new partnership union, at time *t*:

$$g(p_{ijt}) = y_{ji}(t) + \beta_{ij}\boldsymbol{X}_{ijt} + \gamma_i\boldsymbol{W}_i + u_i$$

Where the outcome is the hazard of the event occurring in a spell $j = [1{,}10]$[4] at the time *t* as a function of time-varying $\boldsymbol{X}_{ijt}$ and time-invariant covariates $\boldsymbol{W}_i$. Individual-specific unobservable are represented by the term $u_j \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$, which is assumed to remain fixed over the observation period. $y_j(t)$ is a function of time and consists of linear splines capturing the duration of the single status after union dissolution.

Dependent variable

The first event of interest is the self-reported month and year when the man started living together with a new partner after the separation. I rule out cohabitations that lasted less than three months, as I concentrate only on individuals who exit more established unions and closely resemble to established relationships. In contrast to Ivanova et al., (2013), I include also the relationships with a new partner that started one the month after the previous union dissolution. I do hypothesise that men spend some time in the repartnering market – and that this process is affected by the presence of children – even if they report two concurrent relationships[5,6].

Independent variables

---

[2] Very importantly, when the first union was a marriage, the end date of the relationship is considered as the last date in which the individuals were cohabiting. I use the date of separation rather than the date of divorce to determine the timing of union disruption, in case of marital union. This decision is motivated by two reasons: first, 7.75% of second unions start the month after partners live together in a marriage, although the formal dissolution of the union occurs months/years later; second, it is not always possible to collect the divorce date of marriages.

[3] By exposure time I mean the spell in which men are at risk of a new union formation, after the first union dissolution.

[4] The number of spells of singlehood ranges from 1 to 10, with 67% of the individuals experiencing only one singlehood spell.

[5] People can move out of one residence and into another in the same month without concurrently living with two partners (although in some cases that might happen too). If the end date of a relationship falls in the same month of the start of the following union, I arbitrarily created a one-month spell of singlehood between two relationships.

[6] The counterargument has to do with reverse causality: a new partner may precipitate the ongoing relationship and cause the union dissolution. However, the alternative specification did not change the results significantly.

Parenthood. Three variables specify the parenthood status: the existence of biological children, the resident status of children (co-resident and non-resident children), the presence of a co-resident child below age 6, between 7 and 13, and between 13 and 18. In every wave, individuals declare the birth of a biological child. Based on this information, I constructed a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent had any children, regardless of the partnership context in which the birth occurred (marriage, cohabitation, outside any reported partnership). The residence status of children is represented by a binary time-varying variable indicating the presence of some coresidential children living in the household[7]. In each wave, a parent could (a) report the presence of a biological child in the household and (b) report the time when a child had left household after a union dissolution. In case (a), the children's status of residence is assumed constant throughout the spell between union dissolution and new interview; in case (b), parent-child co-residence ends when the parent reports the child's departure. If it is not possible to derive any information about a child's residence status over his life course or in a specific spell of his life, the child's residence is defined "missing", following the rational for the other variables with missing values. In keeping with previous studies, children are considered non-resident after age 20 (Stewart, et al., 2003).

Number of prior unions. Two dummy variables indicate whether someone has experienced one prior union (first episode of singlehood), and two or more prior unions. Prior evidence in the restricted sample of divorced people signalled that the first breakup is stronger than that of subsequent ones. Too few people go through more than two spells of singlehood, which makes a more specific partition of the number of prior unions impossible.

Duration of prior unions. A set of dummies – spline functions – indicates the sum of the durations of prior unions: 0-1, 1-3, 3-5, 6-9 and over 10 years.

Type of first partnership. A variable identifies people who have ever experienced marriage during any of their previous unions.

Time since union dissolution. Five time-varying linear splines allow for modelling duration dependency: 0-1, 1-3, 3-5, 5-9, 10+ years

Age. Time-varying variables indicate respondent's age in years and represented by splines for age groups: 18-22, 23-26, 27-30, 30-35, 35-40, 40-55.

School enrolment. Categorical time-varying variables represent the highest educational attainment: (1) below O level; (2) O level or equivalent; (3) A level or equivalent; (4) Sub-degree; (5) degree.

Employment status. A time-varying variable indicates the involvement in the labour market. It is lagged by 12 months, because individuals, particularly women, may adjust their work decisions upon entering a union (Aassve et al., 2006).

Parents' separation. A dummy variable captures whether individuals experienced parents' dissolution by the age of 16.

---

[7] The data do not allow for the identification of children with "shared residence" (as in Beaujouan, 2012). Nevertheless, this option was introduced in the UK only in 2006 with the Children and Adoption Act, and remains "little used" (Masardo, 2011,Chapter 6 : "Negotiating shared residence – the experience of separated fathers in Britain and France", in Bridgeman, Keating, Lind, "Regulating family responsibilities")

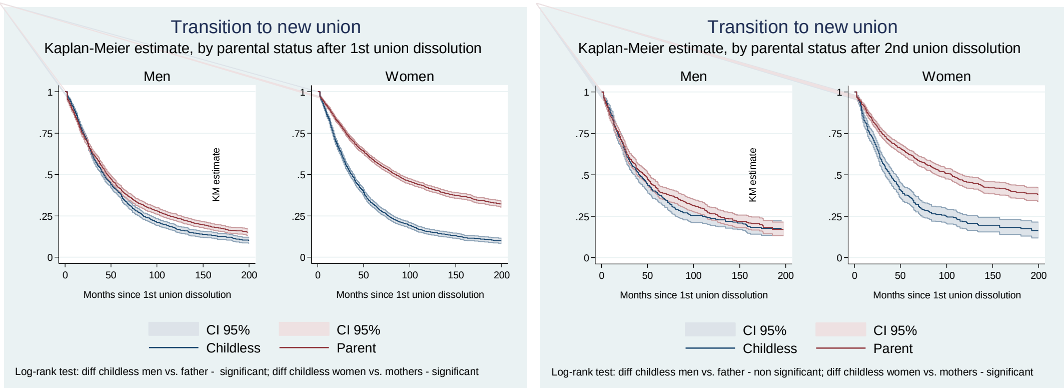
Family socio-economic conditions. Two dummy variables are used: the caretaker's financial hardship assessment when the individual is 16 and father's low socioeconomic status at the time of birth.

Cohort. A dummy indicates the cohort of birth and is intended to proxy for the different cultural *milieux* in which men born in 1958 and 1970 have experienced their transition to adulthood.

6. Results

The Kaplan Meier estimates displayed in Figure 1 show that fathers do not have lower risk of forming new partnerships relative to childless men after first and second birth, while the repartnering chances of childless women differ from those of mothers[8]. This gap may represent the selectivity of the two groups. For instance, childless people may systematically differ from fathers in terms of socio-economic status, educational levels and attitudes towards family, which are associated to patterns of union formation (Wu & Schimmele, 2005; de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003).

Figure 1. Transition to new union after 1st (left) and 2nd (right) union dissolution. Kaplan-Meier estimate



Now, I turn to the event history models, which estimate the influence of parenthood on repartnering, *ceteris paribus*. Although I control for a wide range of confounding variables, in the multivariate analyses it is not possible to control for all the types of selectivity. Therefore, this analysis can't explore any causal effect of the explanatory variables on the repartnering chances of parents, but investigates more fully than the descriptive statistics the association of parental status, children's living arrangements and new union prospects. To disentangle the influence of parental status from the residence status of children, I estimate five specifications, with results presented as relative hazard ratios.

[8] Log-rank tests perfomed. KM of repartnering after higher order separations are not shown because of the small sample size. Intra-gender differences are confirmed also for higher-order repartnering.

Table 3. Effects of characteristics of prior unions on new union formation. Hazard ratios. Men and women (pooled).

	Model 1	Model 2
Some children (Ref. = No children)	0.728***	0.712***
Gender (Ref. = Female)	1.162***	1.057*
Gender * Parental status (Ref= Female*No children)		1.132***
Prob. of repartnering: Childless men vs. women		χ-test = 2.43*
Prob. of repartnering: Fathers vs. mothers		χ-test = 12.7***
Number of IDs	27810	27810
σ^S	0.54	0.57
χ^2	8.28**	9.64**

***Significance <0.01; **significance <0.05; *significance <0.10.
Other controls: duration of previous partnerships, age at union dissolution (splines), number of previous unions, ever married, times since last union dissolution, educational level (5 categories), FT education, cohort, father's SES at age 16, parents' separation by age 16, self-assessed hardship, fathers' low SES

In Model 1, I focus on the influence of gender on the probability of a new partnership (results displayed in Table 3). This model pools observations for men and women who separated at least once. Women are significantly less likely to repartner after a separation. Model 2 is identical to Model 1, but includes an interaction term between gender (with reference being "woman") and parental status (reference being "childless"). If the influence of gender on repartnering decreases in magnitude or becomes non-significant, and the interaction term is significant and positive, I could deduce that children play some role in gender gap of repartnering. The results in the Model 2 show a clear decrease in the magnitude of the coefficient associated to gender, in favour of the interaction term. In this context, women are only marginally (*p<10%*) less likely than men to enter a new union, regardless of their parental status. The χ^2-test comparing the probability of a new partnership for childless men and women confirms that gender differences are only marginally significant (χ^2 =2.43), while the test performed on fathers vs. mothers is significant at the 1% level and thus displays a wider gender gap.

Table 4. Effects of characteristics of prior unions on new union formation. Coefficients

	Model 4		**Model 5**		**Model 6**	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
No children (Ref)						
Some children	-0.083***	-0.057***				
Non resident children			-0.067***	-0.061*	-0.115***	-0.027

Co-resident children			0.123***	-0.052***		
Co-resident children						
0-6					0.066**	-0.272***
7-12					0.163***	-0.185***
13-18					0.139	-0.146**
Age (Ref=42-55)						
18-22	-1.992**	-1.221***	-1.998**	-1.221***	-2.010***	-1.441***
22-26	-0.123**	0.442***	-0.123**	0.432***	-0.129**	0.429***
26-30	0.770***	0.983***	0.768***	0.973***	0.764***	0.965***
30-35	0.629***	0.828***	0.623***	0.821***	0.695***	0.815***
35-42	0.537***	0.592***	0.512***	0.582***	0.503***	0.581***
Ever married	-0.435***	-0.332***	-0.441***	-0.332***	-0.434***	-0.329***
Previous unions (Ref=one union)						
2 or more unions	0.423***	0.217***	0.421***	0.220***	0.419***	0.210***
Duration of last union (Ref =0-1 years)						
1-3 years	-1.292***	-1.129***	-1.295***	-1.127***	-1.291***	-1.125***
3-5 years	-1.439***	-1.337***	-1.436***	-1.334***	-1.438***	-1.330***
6-9 years	-1.302***	-1.422***	-1.307***	-1.424***	-1.304***	-1.423***
10+ years	-1.490***	-1.766***	-1.485***	-1.765***	-1.481***	-1.762***
Time since union dissolution (Ref= 0-1 year)						
1-3 years	-1.321***	-0.922***	-1.323***	-0.922***	-1.333***	-0.921***
3-5 years	-2.171***	-1.868***	-2.169***	-1.867***	-2.162***	-1.862***
5-9 years	-3.259***	-3.010***	-3.269***	-3.009***	-3.266***	-3.005***
10+ years	-4.857***	-4.421***	-4.859***	-4.425***	-4.856***	-4.434***
Cohort						
1950	0.242	0.446***	0.242	0.444***	0.242	0.445***
1960	0.149	0.308**	0.145	0.305**	0.147	0.306**
1970	0.136	0.202	0.138	0.202	0.136	0.201
1980	0.242	0.207*	0.243	0.206*	0.245	0.207*
Constant	1.027***	0.380***	1.012***	0.387***	1.002***	0.361***
Observations	211,291	248,238	211,291	248,238	211,291	248,238
Number of IDs	11,657	16,153	11,657	16,153	11,657	16,153
σ^S	0.46	0.50	0.47	0.52	0.48	0.52
χ^2	23.27**	11.98 **	21.25***	8.23**	22.17**	22.87***

***Significance <0.01; **significance <0.05; *significance <0.10.
Other controls are self-assessed hardship, fathers' low SES, educational level, ethnicity. Coresident children older than 18 are considered non-resident

The results from this analysis suggest that children are responsible for a relevant portion of the gender gap, although they are not the only contributor. My hypothesis is that parent-child coresidence, which is far more frequent for mothers, accounts for this gap more than parenthood *per se*. The following specifications investigate this issue in separate models for men and women.

In Model 3 (Table 4), I assess the effect of having children on the chances to form a new partnership, ignoring the offspring's residence status. Having children significantly decreases the chances of new partnerships for men and, to a larger extent, for women. In Model 4, I focus on how the children's residence, rather than parenthood *per se*, affects the likelihood of repartnering. The permanent presence of co-resident children in the household is associated with less frequent repartnering for men and women. When childcare engagement is looser because children are non-resident, parenthood is not a significant constraint to repartnering, compared with persons who do not have children. Model 5 shows women and men's risk of repartnering adding the last dimension of parenthood of this analysis: the presence of a child aged between 0 and 6, 7 and 13, and between 13 and 18. Interestingly, fathers and mothers exhibit different behaviours for union reconstruction. Living with young dependent children seems an additional source of reluctance to repartnering for mothers. Still, the presence of a kid reduces the negative influence on repartnering for custodial fathers.

7. Conclusions

The main goal of this work is to examine the influence of children on the chances of new union after a union dissolution for men and women and to provide original evidence in the UK context. In addition to assessing the role of parenthood in the repartnering gender gap, I also single out the influence of parent-child coresidence from parenthood itself on the probability of entering a new union.

The findings highlight a differential propensity to repartner between men and women. In contrast to the evidence provided by Ivanova et al. (2013), this gap is not completely explained by the transition to parenthood. A marginal inter-gender difference in repartnering remains, regardless of the presence of children. It is possible that women who are in childbearing years on average distance themselves from partnerships more likely than men. Some studies have stressed that women may be more susceptible to the demise of a relationship (e.g. Poortman, 2007). Other studies have attributed this gender gap to age-dependent behaviours and partners' availability, as women's partnership formation largely decreases at the beginning of their early 30s, relative to men (Beaujouan, 2012). Additional research focusing on age-specific repartnering behaviours might shed some light on gender differences.

The analysis also highlights to what extent parenthood and parent-child coresidence influence individuals' repartnering choices. The findings support the hypothesis that child custody rather that parenthood *per se* slows down repartnering and that the gender imbalance in custody is mostly responsible for the gender disproportion in repartnering. This evidence also supports the claims that parenthood does not enhance an individual's attractiveness in the repartnering market. Further, the argument that custody imposes time constraints results strengthened, although this effect might be gender specific: when accounting for the age of the youngest co-resident child, diverging gender behaviour appears. On the one hand, custodial mothers may give up on seeking new relationships, when they are engaged with very young children, whose childcare is particularly time-consuming. On the other hand, fathers may benefit from a slight allure deriving from parenthood or may more actively search for a partner who takes on the role of step-mother.

Future developments

This research will encompass step-fatherhood. Previous studies showed that also stepchildren may play a role in the repartnering preferences of men and women. Men are deterred from entering in marital and cohabiting partnerships with women who already have children (Goldscheider & Bernhardt, 2002), while women tend to mate with men who have had children in previous partnerships (Goldscheider & Sassler, 2006). However, this evidence concerns only the mating process as a whole, with no specific attention to repartnering, and stems from small samples of the Sweden and the US.

This study will also explore the differences in repartnering habits between the members of the two studies and will contribute to the literature by proposing the first inter-generational analysis of repartnering to date. The twelve years separating the two cohorts translate into a cultural cleavage in terms of family arrangements preferences and post-separation parental duties with likely consequences on repartnering habits. Men from the earlier cohorts follow a typical sequence 'cohabitation-marriage', while, among those born in from the 1970s, a larger proportion of cohabitants do not get to marriage (Bukodi, 2012). Relevant to this point, is the tendency for more individuals from the 1970s and 1980s cohorts to experience serial cohabitation and parenthood during cohabitation. As Kiernan (2006) points out, the partnership status defines the perimeter of parental responsibilities and determines the span of duties of parents after a partnership breakdown.

References

Axinn, William G. and Arland Thornton. 1992. " The re- lationship between cohabitation and divorce: selectivity or causal influence?", Demography 29 (3): 357-374.

Becker. (1981). A Treatise on the Family. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bennett, N. G., Bloom, D. E., & Miller, C. K. (1995). The influence of nonmarital childbearing on the formation of first marriages. Demography, 32(1), 47-62.

Bumpass, L. L., & Raley, R. K. (1995). Redefining single-parent families: Cohabitation and changing family reality. Demography, 32(1), 97-109.

Bernhardt, E., & Goldscheider, F. (2002). Children and union formation in Sweden. European Sociological Review, 18(3), 289–299.

Clarkberg, M., Stolzenberg, R. M., & Waite, L. J. (1995). Attitudes, values, and entrance into cohabitational versus marital unions. Social forces, 74(2), 609-632.

Coleman, D. A. (2000). Male fertility Trends in industrial countries: theories in search of some evidence.pdf. In Fertility and the Male Life-Cycle in the Era of Fertility Decline (pp. 29–60). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dearden, Kirk, Christiane Hale, and Mary Blankson, 1994. " Family structure, function and the early transition to fatherhood in Great Britain", Journal of Marriage and The Family 56: 844-852.

Le Bourdais, C., Desrosiers, H., & Laplante, B. (1995). Factors related to union formation among single mothers in Canada. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 410-420.

Goldscheider, F., & Sassler, S. (2006). Creating stepfamilies: Integrating children into the study of union formation. Journal of Marriage and Family, 68(May), 275–291.

Elder Jr, G. H. (1985). Life course dynamics: trajectories and transitions 1968-1980.

Fido, M., et al. "General Household Survey 2005: Overview Report." Retrieved Dec 1 (2006): 2006.

Furstenberg, F. F., & Spanier, G. B. (1984). Recycling the family: Remarriage after divorce.

Furstenberg, F.F. Jr. and A. Cherlin. 1991. Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Glick, Paul C. "American household structure in transition." Family Planning Perspectives (1984): 205-211.

Graaf, P. De, & Kalmijn, M. (2003). Alternative routes in the remarriage market: Competing-risk analyses of union formation after divorce. Social Forces, 81(4), 1459–1498.

Greene, M., & Biddlecom, A. (2000). Absent and problematic men: Demographic accounts of male reproductive roles. Population and Development …, 26(1), 81–115.

Haskey, J. (1999). Divorce and remarriage in England and Wales. Population Trends, (95), 18–22.

Hofferth, S., & Anderson, K. (2003). Are all dads equal? Biology versus marriage as a basis for paternal investment. Journal of Marriage and Family, 65(February), 213–232.

Ivanova, K., Kalmijn, M., & Uunk, W. (2013). The Effect of Children on Men's and Women's Chances of Re-partnering in a European Context. European Journal of Population / Revue Européenne de Démographie, 29(4), 417–444.

Kiernan, Kathleen E. 1992. "The impact of family disruption in childhood on transitions made in young adult life ", Population Studies 46 (2): 213-234.

Kiernan, K. (2006). Non-residential Fatherhood and Child Involvement: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study. Journal of Social Policy, 35(04), 651.

Kiernan, K., & Smith, K. (2003). Unmarried parenthood: new insights from the Millennium Cohort Study. Population Trends, (114), 26–33.

Koo, H. P., Suchindran, C. M., & Griffith, J. D. (1984). The effects of children on divorce and re-marriage: A multivariate analysis of life table probabilities. Population Studies, 38(3), 451-471.

Lampard, R., & Peggs, K. (1999). Repartnering: the relevance of parenthood and gender to cohabitation and remarriage among the formerly married. The British Journal of Sociology, 50(3), 443–65.

Lewis, J. (2002). The problem of fathers: policy and behaviour in Britain (pp. 125–149).

McLanahan Sara and Larry Bumpass. 1988. " Intergenerational consequences of family disruption", American Journal of Sociology 94: 130-152.

Nock, S. L. (1995). A comparison of marriages and cohabiting relationships. Journal of Family Issues, 16

Oppenheimer, V. K. (1997). Women's employment and the gain to marriage: the specialization and trading model. Annual Review of Sociology, 23, 431–53.

Peacey, V., & Hunt, J. 2008

Poortman, A. R. (2000). Sex Differences in the Economic Consequences of Separation A Panel Study of the Netherlands. European Sociological Review, 16(4), 367-383.

Poortman, A.-R. (2007). The First Cut is the Deepest? The Role of the Relationship Career for Union Formation. European Sociological Review, 23(5), 585–598.

Pryor, Jan, and Bryan Rodgers. Children in changing families: Life after parental separation. Blackwell Publishing, 2001.

Robson, Karen. "Changes in family structure and the well-being of British children: Evidence from a fifteen-year panel study." Child indicators research 3.1 (2010): 65-83.

Steele, F., Kallis, C., & Joshi, H. (2006). The formation and outcomes of cohabiting and marital partnerships in early adulthood: the role of previous partnership experience. Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society), 169(4), 757-779.

Shafer, K., & James, S. (2013). Gender and Socioeconomic Status Differences in First and Second Marriage Formation. Journal of Marriage and Family, 75(June), 544–564.

Smith, Marjorie. "Resident mothers in stepfamilies." The international handbook of stepfamilies: Policy and practice in legal, research, and clinical environments (2008): 151-174.

Sweeney, M. M. (1997). Remarriage of Women and Men After Divorce The Role of Socioeconomic Prospects. Journal of Family Issues, 18(5), 479-502.

Upchurch, D. M., Lillard, L. A., & Panis, C. W. (2002). Nonmarital childbearing: Influences of education, marriage, and fertility. Demography, 39(2), 311-329.

Van der Lippe, T., de Ruijter, J., de Ruijter, E., & Raub, W. (2010). Persistent Inequalities in Time Use between Men and Women: A Detailed Look at the Influence of Economic Circumstances, Policies, and Culture. European Sociological Review, 27(2), 164–179.

Van Hoorn, W. D. (2000). Glad to live alone or happier together. Diversity among young and middle-aged single people. Maandstatistiek van de bevolking, 48, 16-23.

Widmer, E. D., & Ritschard, G. (2009). The de-standardization of the life course: Are men and women equal? Advances in Life Course Research, 14(1-2), 28–39.

Winkler-Dworak, M., & Toulemon, L. (2007). Gender Differences in the Transition to Adulthood in France: Is There Convergence Over the Recent Period? European Journal of Population / Revue européenne de Démographie (Vol. 23, pp. 273–314).

Wu, Z., & Schimmele, C. (2005). Repartnering after first union disruption. Journal of Marriage and Family, 67(February), 27–36.