

## **Diverse family formation trajectories and their consequences for coparenting**

*Manuscript prepared for the 2015 Meeting of the Population Association of America, San Diego*

Anette E. Fasang,

Humboldt-University Berlin and WZB Berlin Social Science Center, anette.fasang@hu-berlin.de

and

Eric D. Widmer,

University of Geneva, eric.widmer@unige.ch

### *Abstract*

Family formation has become increasingly diverse over the past decades across advanced societies moving away from a standardized model. Yet, we know little about possibly enduring consequences of this diversity for family interactions. This paper examines the impact of different family formation pathways on coparenting practices, a dimension that is crucial for child well-being. We compare first-time families with two co-resident biological parents with stepfamilies using data from 300 women living with a biological child, sampled with a matching procedure to equalize first-time and stepfamilies in terms of socio-economic background. Findings from sequence analysis and regression models show that family formation trajectories are structured into six patterns. These patterns are associated with several dimensions of coparenting for stepfamilies, and also, to a weaker extent, for first-time families. Standard family formation trajectories of early marriage and quick motherhood are associated with high quality coparenting in first-time families. However in stepfamilies, such standard family formation trajectories depress coparenting quality. Instead, women in stepfamilies are better equipped to navigate coparenting with the biological father outside of traditional marital roles if they had more extensive experiences of independent adult living before motherhood.

## *1. Introduction*

Family formation has become increasingly diverse across advanced societies in the past decades. People postpone or forego marriage and parenthood and divorce rates have risen along with higher rates of cohabitation and non-marital childbearing (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Cherlin, 2010; Goldscheider, 1997; Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014; Shanahan, 2000). More generally, in North America and Europe, standard family stages characterize smaller parts of the population and transitions between them occur at more dispersed chronological ages – often summarized as the ‘de-standardization’ of family formation (Brückner & Mayer, 2005; Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Widmer & Ritschard, 2009). As a consequence, on average people spend more time in cohabiting and non-cohabiting relationships before entering parenthood than a few decades ago. This is likely not without consequences for socialization processes and parenting. Yet, few researchers have considered enduring consequences of increasingly diverse family formation empirically for such interactional processes occurring in families. Coparenting refers to interactions between parents that are centered on the child (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, Crnic & Gable, 1995; McHale, 2007). The quality of coparenting in terms of beneficial or detrimental effects on child development depends on the extent to which parents support each other at the instrumental and emotional level in their parenting tasks. This paper examines, whether mothers’ deviation from the standard model of family formation trajectories with early marriage and motherhood with little independent adult living has enduring effects on several dimensions of coparenting practices with the biological father of their children, an outcome that is crucial for child development and child well-being (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

How children fare in family structures other than two co-residential biological parents has been of central concern in family research (Amato & Keith, 1991; Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010; Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). First-time families in which the biological father lives

in the same household and stepfamilies where this is not the case clearly differ in the demands on coparenting between the biological parents. An additional stepparent who is involved in everyday family interactions further complicates coparenting in stepfamilies. Previous family formation trajectories are strongly intertwined with women's likelihood of living in a first-time or stepfamily. Neglecting women's previous family formation trajectories might thereby obscure some of the mechanisms by which family structure affects coparenting, if differences between first-time and stepfamilies are actually attributable to differential family formation trajectories that these women experienced. The particular experiences made and skills learned along women's previous family formation trajectories might affect coparenting differently in first-time compared with stepfamilies.

Comparisons of different family structures are bedeviled by socioeconomic differences between them (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010). Often, it is impossible to distinguish whether any differences found are due to average socioeconomic differences or indeed related to a particular family structure. People who live in stepfamily arrangements tend to be of lower socioeconomic status in terms of education and income, which might directly depress outcomes such as parenting irrespective of family structure (Carlson & England, 2011; Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). We therefore use a dataset from Geneva Switzerland that employed a matching technique to selected 150 women in first-time families and 150 women in stepfamilies that were equal on a number of socio-demographic characteristics (Widmer, Favez, Aeby, De Carlo, & Doan, 2012). This filters out heterogeneity in social background between the two groups and thereby enables a comparison of these two family structures net of social background.

Results from sequence analysis and a series of regression models show that mothers' family formation trajectories in early and mid-adulthood indeed have enduring effects on coparenting - but in different ways for mothers in first-time and in stepfamilies. In particular,

following a traditional family formation trajectory of early marriage and quick motherhood with little experience of independent living in adulthood is beneficial for coparenting in first-time families, but depresses coparenting practices in stepfamilies. Instead, women in stepfamilies are better equipped to navigate coparenting with the biological father outside of traditional marital roles if they had more extensive experiences of independent adult living before motherhood.

Our contribution to the literature is twofold. First, we show that women's previous family formation trajectories have enduring effects on coparenting practices. Research on coparenting should therefore more routinely incorporate a life course perspective on mother's previous family formation. Second, our results highlight different associations between family formation trajectories and coparenting in first-time and in stepfamilies. Neglecting women's previous family formation trajectories will thereby obscure the mechanisms by which family structure affects coparenting practices and child well-being. We conclude that similar results can be expected for other advanced societies, while the strengths of the associations will likely be mediated by welfare state context.

## *2. Diverse family formation trajectories*

According to the family life cycle model, the family formation stage, also referred to as the 'launching stage', is characterized by fast-paced transitions of leaving the parental home, marriage and parenthood as the standard model (Aldous, 1996; Duvall, 2014; Glick, 1977). For simplicity, we subsequently refer to this model as the "standard model of family formation". Critiques question whether it was ever empirically tenable, other than possibly in the historically exceptional period following World War II in the United States (Aldous, 1990). It nonetheless captures a normative model that is rewarded by social policies particularly in conservative welfare states (Gornick, Meyers, & Ross, 1997; Korpi, 2000; Prince Cooke, 2011).

With growing de-standardization of family formation across the past decades, life courses

increasingly deviate from the standard family formation trajectory as formulated in the family life cycle model. Important components of these deviations are the postponement of marriage and motherhood, higher incidences of living apart together (LAT) and cohabiting relationships before motherhood as well as an increasing prevalence of separation and ensuing stepfamily arrangements (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Goldscheider, 1997; Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014; Shanahan, 2000).

A careful description of the growing diversity of family formation trajectories has been of core concern in family research from a life course perspective increasingly using the relatively recent tools of sequence analysis (Aassve, Billari, & Piccarreta, 2007; Billari, 2001; Bras, Liefbroer, & Elzinga, 2010a; Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Fasang, 2014; Widmer & Ritschard, 2007). Unlike the family life cycle perspective, the life course perspective takes individual life courses and not families as the units of analysis (see Aldous, 1990). Beyond a trend towards increasing de-standardization, i.e. growing diversity in family formation, in most advanced societies over time, systematic variation of family formation trajectories by welfare state regime has been difficult to pin down (see Fasang, 2014 for a review). In contrast to the large amount of research dedicated to describing the diversity of individual family formation trajectories, the potentially enduring consequences of these trajectories for individual outcomes and family interactions have received almost no attention in the life course literature (see Müller, Sapin, Gauthier, Orita, & Widmer, 2012 for an exception).

In contrast, family researchers have shown increasing concern about the impact of family instability on child well-being (Crosnoe, Prickett, Smith, & Cavanagh, 2014; McLanahan, 2004). Family instability is usually assessed based on the number of parental relationship transitions and thus captures some of the increasing family diversity and deviations from the standard family life cycle model. Findings indicate that more family instability, particularly in early childhood, goes along with lower quality parenting and lower child well-being (Beck, Cooper, McLanahan, &

Brooks-Gunn, 2010; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007).

These studies largely consider family instability experienced by individuals during childhood. Few acknowledge that not only changes in family structure experienced during childhood, but also mothers' previous family formation before the child was born potentially have enduring effects on parenting and child well-being (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). Such antecedent trajectories are primarily discussed with regard to selection processes (Crosnoe et al., 2014), such that family transitions in childhood might not causally affect child well-being (stability and change hypothesis). Instead women's antecedent attributes and behaviors might select them into family instability once the child is born that would have negatively affected child well-being anyhow.

Beyond selection into specific family structures, women's previous family formation trajectories can be understood as a developmental phenomenon. They are socializing processes in their own right that expose individuals to specific interactional experiences and lead them through roles associated with different expectations and demands (Widmer, 2010). This equips them with different sets of psychosocial skills and might shape their attitudes toward family relationships and family interactional outcomes, such as coparenting. For instance, research shows that women who acquired and practiced skills living independently in nonfamily settings as young adults are more likely to hold nontraditional gender-role attitudes, plan to have fewer children and are more attached to the labor market (Waite, Goldscheider, & Witsberger, 1986). Fomby and Cherlin (2007) report that mothers antecedent behaviors and attributes, including age at first sex and age at first birth, at least partly accounts for the negative association between family instability and child well-being. Arguably, women's previous family formation trajectories function both as channels of selectivity into specific family structures and as developmental experiences. These developmental experiences might enduringly shape family

outcomes, such as coparenting differentially in different family structures.

## *2.1 Coparenting*

Research has shown that coparenting affects the social and cognitive development of the child from early childhood on (see Teubert & Pinquart, 2010, for a meta-analysis): disruptions in the coparental relationship have been linked to internalized and externalized symptoms (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; McConnell & Kerig, 2002; Schoppe, Mangelsdorf & Frosch, 2001), lower adaptation at school (Stright & Neitzel, 2003; McHale, Rao, & Krasnow, 2000), and less competencies in peer relationships (Leary & Katz, 2004). The literature identifies two main dimensions of coparenting: the first is “support”, which has also been termed solidarity, cooperation, or warmth. It refers to a common perspective between the parents, to the expression of affection between them, to the reciprocal validation of their parenting behaviours, and to instrumental help they provide to one another. The second dimension is “conflict”, also termed antagonism, competition, or undermining. It captures parents open expression of hostility to each another, systematic contradictions between them, and mutual disparagement, which is especially detrimental for child development (Minuchin, Rosman & Baker, 1978). Conflict and support are understood as distinct dimensions that can simultaneously be present in coparenting (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

Explanatory factors associated with coparenting have been mostly psychological or micro-interactive in nature, with little attention given to social factors or previous life course experiences. Research stresses the importance of conjugal quality for coparenting (Cowan & McHale, 1996; Frosch, Mangelsdorf & McHale, 1998; Margolin, Gordis & John, 2001; Van Egeren, 2003). An extensive literature supports beneficial effects of supportive coparenting with the previous partner after a divorce for child development (for instance, Adamsons & Pasley, 2006; Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995; Papernow, 2013; Pasley & Garneau, 2012; Whiteside & Becker, 2000). As far as demographic and social factors are concerned, age and gender of the child have been the main dimensions considered empirically to date (Stroud, Durbin, Wilson & Mendelsohn, 2011; McConnell & Kerig, 2002; Teubert & Pinquart, 2011). Indeed, nothing is

known about the life trajectories of parents enabling or disabling such supportive coparenting to be maintained after separation. Further, few studies have addressed coparenting among stepfamilies, once parents have re-partnered with a new partner who potentially brings additional children into the family configuration.

## *2.2 Linking family formation trajectories and coparenting*

Several theoretical perspectives suggest associations between previous family trajectories and family interactions, such as coparenting. On a general level, they assume that some processes of path dependency connect early adult family formation experiences to later life family behavior (Widmer, 2010). We discuss stress theories, economic explanations and the subjective meaning that women attach to their roles as mothers and wives. We focus on mothers because our analysis is restricted to mothers. However many of these considerations may extend to father as well.

*Stress theories* suggest that the instability of women's previous family formation, i.e. the number of transitions between family arrangements and partners, will impact their parenting behavior (Amato, 2000a; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). On one hand, stress accumulated with each transition across unstable family formation trajectories might spill over into current coparenting practices and strain parent's efforts to communicate and cooperate in the interest of their child. On the other hand, the experience of multiple "non-traditional" family arrangements in early adulthood, including extended periods of living alone, or moving in and out of cohabiting relationships, could enable parents to acquire communication and cooperation skills outside the traditional roles of married spouses (Waite et al., 1986). These in turn might prove useful in navigating coparenting practices particularly after separation.

Theories emphasizing *economic disadvantage* associated with specific family structures such as early single motherhood highlight the debilitating effect of poverty on mastering



challenges of everyday life, including parenting practices (Carlson & England, 2011; Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). More generally economic dependence on a breadwinner changes women's leverage in negotiating coparenting practices with their partner. For instance, women with low education who move into early marriage and motherhood rather seamlessly after leaving the parental home combine both low independent earnings potential and little experience of economically independent adult life. Such a family formation trajectory might therefore reinforce compliance in coparenting with a partner they economically depend on. In case of separation, economic dependence will lower thresholds for re-partnering. The quick presence of a new spouse might create complicated coparenting situations with an ex-partner. Economic considerations would therefore suggest differential effects on coparenting with the biological father in first-time and in stepfamilies.

Further, *normative expectations* associated with the life course may play a key role in shaping coparenting. Individuals who have a clear conception of a normative standardized model of life trajectories stating which family stage should be achieved at what chronological age (Neugarten et al., 1995; Settersten, 2003) may have difficulties navigating coparenting practices with their ex-partners after separation. Related to this, the *subjective meaning* women attach to their roles as mothers and wives likely affects coparenting (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Women who are weakly attached to the labor market might draw more heavily on their roles as mothers and wives according to the standard family life cycle model as a source of identity and achievement (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). This in turn could lead to particularly compliant coparenting in first-time families to uphold the image of the nuclear family. In this context, separation might appear as a particularly stark disillusionment and could be perceived as a personal failure. This in turn could unleash anger and blame towards the ex-spouse, which would undermine coparenting practices.

## *Summary and hypotheses*

In this paper, we examine the consequences of individual family formation trajectories and their systematic deviations from the standard family life cycle model on coparenting practices in first-time and stepfamilies. In contrast to quantitative summary measures of family instability, we first establish a typology of women's family formation trajectories that illuminates qualitative differences between women's diverse family formation trajectories. Based on previous research (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009), we expect distinct types of trajectories to emerge from the data. Switzerland had observed a greater influx of women into the labor market and increasing tolerance of alternative family forms in recent cohorts (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009), especially in large cities, similar to other advanced societies. We therefore expect to find several distinct family formation patterns that deviate from the standard trajectory of family formation featuring a quick shift from parental home to marriage and motherhood.

Second, we examine which types of family formation trajectories are associated with high quality coparenting in first-time families and in stepfamilies. Several reasons suggest that deviations from the standard family formation model will be associated with more functional coparenting for *mothers in stepfamilies*: (1) they have more extensive experience of independent adult living, in previous relationships and with separations that enabled them to acquire communication and cooperation skills outside the traditional roles of married spouses (Waite et al., 1986). These prove useful in navigating coparenting with an ex-partner after separation; (2) they are likely to have more power to negotiate with the father of the child due to on average greater economic and emotional independence related to their delayed motherhood and extended independent adult living; (3) they grant less symbolic value and subjective meaning to their roles as mothers and wives in nuclear family arrangements and hence can envision alternative parenting practices to those with a coresident husband.

For mothers in *first-time families*, our expectations are less straightforward. On one hand, mothers who deviate from the standard model of family formation may have more resources (economic and educational credentials, a greater number of intimacy experiences and relationships with other partners) to increase the quality of their coparenting. On the other hand, mothers with standard pathways to family formation correspond to the expectation associated with the nuclear family model and its various stages of development as defined in the family life cycle model (Mattlesich & Hill, 1987), which is supported by the welfare state and family policies in Switzerland (Kellerhals & Widmer, 2012). Given this contextual support for their standard family formation trajectory, they might show more functional coparenting practices than mothers with alternative pathways.

### 3. DATA AND METHODS

We use data from the *Stepout* study (Widmer et al., 2012) in which 300 women, who had a biological child aged 5 to 13 years and lived with a partner (cohabiting or married) in a heterosexual relationship, were interviewed face-to-face between spring 2009 and winter 2010). First 150 first-time families were randomly selected from a list of all households comprising children in the Geneva, Switzerland area. To qualify as a first-time family the child had to be the biological child of both the respondent and her coresident partner and neither the respondent and nor her partner had children from previous relationships. Based on these 150 first time families, 150 stepfamilies were selected from the list of households with children in Geneva that matched the randomly selected first-time families in terms of the mother's age, household socioeconomic status and education. In the stepfamilies the child was the biological child of the respondent, but not of her co-resident partner. The partner or the respondent might have other children, either with the respondent or another partner, living in the home or elsewhere.

Studies often wrestle with the problem of distinguishing whether differences between

first-time and stepfamilies are driven by the on average lower socioeconomic status and poorer economic resources of step families (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010). By equalizing the comparison groups on socioeconomic background, we are able to examine the relationship between previous family formation, family structure and coparenting net of socioeconomic differences across these two groups. Note that due to the matching, these data are not representative for the population in Geneva, since stepfamilies are overrepresented (50 percent as compared to an estimated 30 percent in the population). Stepfamilies are often still a relatively small proportion in the population yielding small numbers in representative surveys. The *Stepout* study provides a sufficiently large subgroup of stepfamilies for a meaningful comparison with mothers in first-time families. In addition, the *Stepout* study contains an unusually detailed assessment of previous family formation trajectories, family interactions and associated psychological outcomes on the parental, child and family level that are generally not available in large-scale quantitative surveys (see Virj, 2014). Therefore this data is particularly well suited to examine how women's previous family trajectories affect coparenting practices in first-time and stepfamilies to generate insights relevant to other urban areas in advanced societies.

### *3.1 Variables*

*Women's family formation trajectories* were measured between ages 23 and 34. This age window was chosen to exclude the majority of parental home leaving and late adolescence. We thereby restrict the analysis to family formation trajectories starting from independent adulthood to separate it from the impact of late adolescence. This age window includes most first births in Switzerland and therefore covers the time period of fertility onset well (OFS, 2012; Kellerhals & Widmer, 2012). To approximate the real complexity of family formation trajectories they are specified multi-dimensionally based on co-residence, legal marital status, subjective relationship status and the presence of children. We define 10 family states: (1) "living in the parental home

with two biological parents, no own children”, (2) “parental home with one biological parent, no own children”, including single parent and step parent families, (3) “living alone, no child”, (4) “living alone, with child, not in a relationship”, (5) “living alone, with child, in a LAT relationship, (6) “cohabiting with partner, no child”, (7) “cohabiting with partner, with child”, (8) “married with partner, no child”, (9) “married with partner, with child”, (10) “other”, which mainly includes persons living with siblings or friends. We refer to women’s individual sequences as *family formation trajectories*. Groups of similar family formation trajectories that represent a common pattern are termed *family formation pathways*.

We use several well-established and validated coparenting scales (McHale 1997, 1999; French version by Frascarolo et al 2009). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all coparenting outcomes included in the analyses. To measure coparenting 14 items are evaluated along three dimensions: family integrity (seven items;  $\alpha = .82$ ), conflict (three items;  $\alpha = .89$ ), and disparagement (three items;  $\alpha = .74$ ). Integrity covers the “support” dimension of coparenting, whereas conflict and disparagement refer to the “conflict” dimension. The items on these scales are related to emotional and relational behaviors between parents in front of the child or in which the child is the focus. They include: “*How often in a typical week do you make an affirming or a complimentary remark about your partner to the child?*”; “*How often in a typical week do you find yourself in a mildly tensed or sarcastic interchange with your partner about the child in the child’s presence?*”. Each item is rated from 1 (almost never) to 7 (almost constantly), a mean score being computed for each dimension. The coparenting scales were collected in the sample of first-time families and the sample of stepfamilies. For stepfamilies both coparenting with the current partner and the biological father of the child was assessed. In this study, we only use coparenting with the biological father.

Control variables include the age of the respondent and the child at the time of the interview, both centered at the mean, mothers education, and place of birth outside of Switzerland. We additionally control for age at the interview, to account for the time elapsed

between measurement of the outcome and end of the trajectory at age 34. For 53 percent of the women the coparenting outcomes were measured within five years after the end of the trajectory at age 34. In total, 87 percent were measured within 10 years after the end of the trajectory. Given that the trajectories evolve over a longer period of time, time gaps between them and later life outcomes likely are not as consequential as for targeted independent variables at one point in time. Nonetheless, to additionally test the robustness of our findings to the gaps between the end of the trajectory and the outcome measured, we ran all analyses on a subsample of the 53 percent whose outcomes were measured within five years after the interview. Both the family formation clusters and their association with the outcomes remain robust. The most notable differences are that the smallest group presented below does not appear as an independent cluster anymore and some coefficients fail to reach significance, but the effect directions and sizes remain very similar (available upon request).

### *3.2. Methods*

We use sequence analysis, cluster analysis and regression analysis. To create a typology of diverse family formation trajectories emphasizing qualitative differences between them we use sequence analysis (Abbott, 1995) and calculate a matrix containing pairwise distances between women's family formation trajectories. This is done with optimal matching with substitution costs of 2 and indel costs of half the maximum substitution costs at 1 to ensure that both the order of family states and the timing of transitions between them contribute to the calculation of distance (see MacIndoe and Abbott, 2004). The substantive results were robust when using the Dynamic Hamming distance (Lesnard 2010) that emphasizes difference only in the timing of transitions as an alternative cost specification. Ward cluster analysis is employed on the pairwise sequence distance matrix to identify groups of similar family formation trajectories. Several standard cluster cut-off criteria (Average Silhouette width (ASW), Point Bisceral Correlation

(PBC), and Huber's Gamma Somers' D (HGSD)) clearly support six family formation clusters as the best grouping compared to adjacent cluster numbers ( $ASW = 0.25$ ) (see Studer 2013, Kaufman & Rousseow 2009, Hennig and Liao 2013).

We first present a description of the six family formation clusters among first-time and stepfamilies, which also illuminates to what extent specific family formation trajectories select women into first-time or stepfamilies. Kruskal-Wallis and Anova statistics are calculated to determine, whether the clusters differ on socio-demographic characteristics in a statistically meaningful way. The description of family formation clusters includes a sequence complexity measure (Elzinga 2010) that summarizes within sequence variability over time (number of states and variation of duration spent in them) as well as the average sequence distance within each group as an indicator of cluster homogeneity. The lower the average sequence distance, the more homogeneous this particular group. We then calculate a series of OLS regression models to estimate the impact of these family formation trajectories on different coparenting outcomes. These models include interactions of the family formation clusters with family structure – first-time or stepfamily to identify potentially differential effects for them. All metric independent variables are mean-centered.

We cannot statistically identify causal relationships between family formation trajectories, family structure and women's coparenting practices, given that previous family formation trajectories and family structure are clearly endogenous. We theorize family formation trajectories as both selection processes and developmental experiences and present rich descriptive evidence on associations between such trajectories, family structure and coparenting to inform theory building. Due to the matched sample out the *Stepout* study our analysis has the added benefit of factoring out socioeconomic differences as one important source of heterogeneity between first-time families and stepfamilies. Further, we ensure that the family formation trajectories are located temporally before the coparenting outcomes.

#### 4. Results

Figure 2 shows state distribution plots of the six family formation patterns identified with sequence analysis. The colors represent different family formation states. The graphs sum up the proportion of each woman in the respective family formation states along the process for each cluster. The clusters are sorted by size such that the largest group is at the bottom of the graph and the smallest group is at the top. The size of the clusters in the graph is proportional to their size in the study population. Note that the cluster sizes are not representative of the population, because stepfamilies were oversampled in the matching procedure to enable meaningful comparisons between first-time and stepfamilies. However, the sample of first-time families can be considered representative for first-time families in the Geneva area, and the stepfamily sample can also be considered representative for stepfamilies in this area. Table 2 summarizes descriptive statistics for the six groups. Kruskal-Wallis Chi<sup>2</sup> tests and ANOVAs show that the six groups are significantly different from one another on almost all characteristics.

Group 1) “*Early marriage, quick motherhood*” comprises 37 percent of the sample. It features women who move quickly from living in the parental home to moving in with a partner, marriage and motherhood following the steps of the standard life cycle model of family formation. By age 27 half of the women in this group have a child, by age 30 all of them are mothers. They have very little experience of living alone or in non-marital cohabitation (0.4 years on average compared to 1.6 years in the total sample, table 2). Marriage and motherhood are strongly coupled with an average of only one or two years between them. This standard life cycle model of family formation is the most homogeneous group visible in the lowest average within group sequence distances (table 2). However, this traditional early family formation pattern does not necessarily entail high relationship stability. On the contrary, 42 percent of the women in this group were living in a stepfamily arrangement at the time of the interview (compared to 49 percent in the total sample). A high proportion of women in stepfamilies did



therefore start out on a trajectory following the standard life cycle model of family formation. At the same time these women were less well equipped to maintain a family independently after separation, with the lowest proportion of higher education and correspondingly lower earnings capacity on the labor market (42 percent compared to 56 in the total sample, table 2). Compared to the other groups they spend the least time in full-time employment and the most time in part-time employment leading to higher financial dependence on a partner. This seems to lower their threshold for re-partnering after separation, visible in the very short periods of time living alone as adults. As hypothesized above, these characteristics might negatively interfere with coparenting practices for women who separated after such a family formation trajectory, but not for those who remain with their first-time partner.

Cluster 2) *“Late marriage, extended childlessness”* accounts for 20 percent of the women in our sample. These women have both longer periods of childless cohabitation before marrying at later ages and spend more time in marriage before motherhood, which indicates a much weaker coupling between these two transitions than for the first group. They spend considerably more time in a couple relationship coordinating their lives in the absence of children. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, this group shows the same proportion of stepfamilies, 42 percent, as the standard life cycle model of family formation in group 1, but above average education and a slightly lower percentage of parental divorce (22 compared to 29 percent in the total sample) (table 2).

The third family formation pattern 3) *“Early unmarried motherhood”* comprises 14 percent of the study population with early, unmarried motherhood, either in a cohabiting relationship or living alone. Of those living alone with a child, some report being single, while others report LAT relationship for quite extensive durations (represented in dark blue). In most cases women switch between these two states one or more times throughout the observed time period. They show the highest within group sequence distances and the highest sequence

complexity among all clusters (table 2). Indeed, 83 percent were living in a stepfamily arrangement without the biological father of their child at the time of the interview (table 2). This group shows the strongest selection into a stepfamily structure, with all other clusters fairly even between first-time and stepfamilies. Other characteristics that set these women apart are the highest proportion of parental divorce (43 compared to 29 percent in the total sample), and a particularly low share of foreign-born women (20 compared to 32 percent in the total sample), while their education is close to average. In line with previous findings, this supports that women who experienced parental divorce during childhood shy away from entering marital unions themselves and develop more volatile attachment and relationship behavior in adulthood (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Amato, 2000b; Wolfinger, 2003).

Group 4) “*Extended living in parental home and alone*” make up for 12 percent of the sample with women who are strongly anchored in the family of origin with the longest duration of living in the parental home after age 23. Notably, they also show the lowest percentage of parental divorce (8 percent compared to 29 percent in the total sample). This extended living in the parental home is followed by the longest period of living alone single and childless during early adulthood (table 2). They actively start building a family of procreation only in their late 20ies and early 30ies. These women show the highest proportion of higher education (75 compared to 56 percent in the total sample). They therefore have higher earnings potential on the labor market coupled with particularly long durations of living in the family of origin . These conditions could increase women’s bargaining power in conjugal conflict and decrease their willingness to compromise in coparenting in first-time families.

Group 5) “*Extended childless cohabitation*” equally comprises 12 percent of the sample with extended periods of stable childless cohabitation between ages 25 and 30. Some women move in and out of living alone and cohabiting with several partners, but most of them experience one long period of childless cohabitation. Around age 30, they give birth to their first

child, but most of them remain unmarried also as mothers. They have above average education, longer durations of full-time employment and comprise fewer foreign born women as the sample average, but do not deviate notably otherwise (table 2).

The last group 6) “*Alternative arrangements followed by marriage*” accounts for only 6 percent of the sample. These women’s family formation is characterized by the residual “other” category that mainly includes living with friends or siblings. Motherhood sets in around age 28 and is strongly coupled with marriage. This group could qualify as an “outlier pattern” given its small size. The highest proportion of foreign-born women, above average education and longest duration in full-time employment in this cluster may be related to their likelihood of sorting into this fairly exceptional pattern (table 2).

In sum, the results of the sequence analysis show that women’s family formation histories between ages 23 and 34 cluster into six coherent and distinct patterns for our study population. These six patterns vary both in the occurrence and duration of different family states, and the timing of transitions between them. There is no extremely heterogeneous “junk cluster” comprising very different family formation histories, which suggests overall strong structuring in these trajectories. Importantly, in each of the six family formation clusters, we find both women who were in first-time and in stepfamilies at the time of the interview. Group 3) *Early unmarried motherhood* is associated with the strongest selection into a step family arrangement, but also not deterministically with still 13 percent in first-time families in this group. In all other clusters, women in stepfamilies and first-time families are fairly equally represented. This warrants a better understanding of how the developmental experiences made along these trajectories play out differentially for women’s coparenting in first-time families and in stepfamilies.

As outlined above, we hypothesize that women who most closely represent the standard life cycle model of family formation, cluster 1) *early marriage quick motherhood*, are relatively ill equipped for independent living after separation due to little experience of independent living

earlier in adulthood and stronger economic dependence (Waite et al. 1986). They might be more compliant in coparenting in first-time families but it will be particularly difficult for them to balance coparenting requirements with an ex-partner when economic dependence is coupled with a sense of failure in their family roles after separation. We therefore expect poorer coparenting outcomes for women in this standard life cycle model of family formation after separation. In contrast, we assume that women who experienced family formation trajectories that deviate from the standard model with frequent rearrangements, living alone, and moving in and out of different family arrangements developed higher tolerance for ambiguity in family relationships and skills to communicate in the interest of the child outside of the traditional roles of married spouses along these trajectories. The family formation groups of 3) *Unmarried motherhood*, 4) *Extended cohabitation*, 5) *Extended living in the parental home*, as well as 6) *Alternative arrangements* will then be associated with more functional coparenting for women in stepfamilies compared to those who follow the standard life cycle model of family formation. In contrast, women in first-time families who experienced extended periods of independent adult life might tend to struggle more in compromising with their spouses on coparenting issues having more extensive experience of making decision on their own throughout adulthood.

#### 4.2 Family formation trajectories and coparenting

Table 3 summarizes results from multivariate regression analyses for first-time and stepfamilies in the three coparenting outcomes: integrity, conflict and disparagement. They include interactions of the six family formation pathways with the current family structure, i.e. stepfamilies or first-time families. The main effects summarize the impact of the family formation pathways for first-time families. The interaction effects show their effect on coparenting in stepfamilies (table 3). Cluster 1), “*Early marriage, quick motherhood pathway*” representing the standard life cycle model of family formation, is taken as the reference category.

The three indicators of coparenting practices provide distinct but nevertheless congruent results in supporting differential effects of women's previous family formation pathways on coparenting in first-time and in stepfamilies. The direction of the effects is mostly opposite for first-time compared with stepfamilies with several significant interactions between the family formation clusters and family structure. Overall, the family formation clusters have fewer and weaker effects in first-time families than in stepfamilies. The differential effects by family structure are strongest for disparagement, which is particularly detrimental for child well-being, compared with the other coparenting indicators.

*Integrity in coparenting* is lower in stepfamilies compared with first time families (table 3). However, integrity is higher for women in stepfamilies who experienced family formation trajectories that deviate from the standard life cycle model of family formation compared to those who followed the standard model. This is visible in the opposite signs of the main effects and interaction effects of the family formation pathways with family structure for almost all clusters. However, they only reach statistical significance for two clusters. Cluster 2) the “*late marriage*” pathway shows significantly higher levels of integrity for women in stepfamilies. Possibly long periods of living in a childless couple before parenthood foster the development of active communication skills that remain beneficial for integrity in coparenting also after separation. The results further support higher integrity in coparenting for women in stepfamilies with a family formation trajectory of cluster 3) “*Early unmarried motherhood*”, albeit only at the 10 percent level. Experiences in navigating romantic relationships outside of the traditional roles of marriage possibly better equip them for creating integrity in coparenting after separation.

We find less impact of women's previous family formation trajectory on *conflict in coparenting*, although the effect sizes for the family formation clusters are again mostly opposite for women in first-time and in stepfamilies. Women who experienced a family formation pathway of multiple alternative arrangements represented by group 6), e.g. living with siblings or

friends, have lower levels of conflict in coparenting in a stepfamily.

Differential effects of the family formation pathways for first-time and stepfamilies are most pronounced for *disparagement*, for which deleterious effects on child development and well-being are well-documented (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998). In contrast to conflict in coparenting, disparagement reported by the mother pertains to her behavior only and to a lesser extent to dyadic dynamics between her and the (previous) spouse. For first-time families, all pathways other than group 1), the standard family life cycle model of family formation, report higher levels of disparagement. Women in the most traditional family formation group either agree most with their spouses coparenting and have the lowest conflict in general, or are most compliant and least apt to criticize their spouse in front of their child. However, among stepfamilies, i.e. for women who separated from such an “*early marriage quick motherhood*” trajectory, show the highest levels of disparagement compared to all other family formation pathways. This is visible in the significant negative interaction effects for the family formation groups and stepfamilies for all clusters compared to the standard family life cycle reference group. In particular women in groups 2), 3), 4) and 6) that are characterized by longer periods of independent living in adulthood and more volatile previous family formation trajectories with multiple separations and family reconfigurations accumulated experiences that enable them to avoid dysfunctional coparenting, such as disparagement after separation.

## 5. Conclusion

Family formation has become increasingly diverse across advanced societies in the past decades (Cherlin, 2010; Goldscheider, 1997; Shanahan, 2000). Systematic deviations from the fast-paced transitions of leaving the parental home, marriage and motherhood as formulated in the family life cycle model and supported by many developed welfare states (Lewis, 2001; Sainsbury, 1999) are increasingly common. Yet, to date we know little about the possibly

enduring consequences of this growing diversity of family formation for family interactions. This paper examined the impact of women's family formation trajectories on coparenting, an outcome that is crucial for child development and child well-being (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

This paper contributes to the literature first by showing that women's family formation trajectories indeed have enduring effects on coparenting. Beyond personality dimensions or micro-interactional processes related to marital quality (Beaton, Doherty & Wenger, 2013; Cowan, Cowan & Mehta, 2009; Frosch, Mangelsdorf & McHale, 1998; Margolin, Gordis & John, 2001; Van Egeren, 2003) longitudinal life course determinants should therefore more routinely be included as predictors of various dimensions of parenting and socialization processes, including coparenting.

Second, we show that such enduring effects of diverse family formation trajectories differ for women in first-time and in stepfamilies. Family formation trajectories certainly function as channels of selection into different family structures. However, our findings show that women who live in stepfamilies and first-time families have fairly similar previous family formation trajectories. In all clusters we find women who end up in first-time and in stepfamily arrangements. Thus, these trajectories are by no means deterministic channels of selection. This underlines the importance of not only acknowledging family formation trajectories in the context of selection, but theorizing them as developmental processes.

The results show that family formation trajectories that diverge from the standard life cycle model of a swift transition to marriage and motherhood decrease the quality of coparenting in first-time families but have positive effects for coparenting practices in stepfamilies. Coparenting in first-time families is facilitated by the standardized family formation model, which contributes to enforcing a set of social norms and cultural expectations about the gendered roles of mothers and fathers and stresses their overall interdependence in making family work. This strengthens integrity and makes disparagement in coparenting less likely. However, this

same standard model of family formation triggered a much larger share of disparagement in stepfamilies, a phenomenon detrimental for children growing up in non-nuclear families (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998). Deviations from the standardized model of family formation thus have opposite consequences for coparenting in first-time and step-families: negative as long as parents remain within the framework of the nuclear family model, and positive as soon as separation, divorce and family recomposition occur. The nuclear family ideal therefore remains consequential in the context of a growing diversity of family formation: family formation trajectories that reinforce it make the adaptation to the new set of constraints associated with post-separation family life more difficult. In line with previous findings, our results highlight the formative impact of independent adult living for women's later life outcomes (Waite et al., 1986). Especially for women in stepfamilies, experiences of independent adult living and separations from previous partnerships seem to equip them with better communication skills with a co-parent outside of the traditional roles of married spouses.

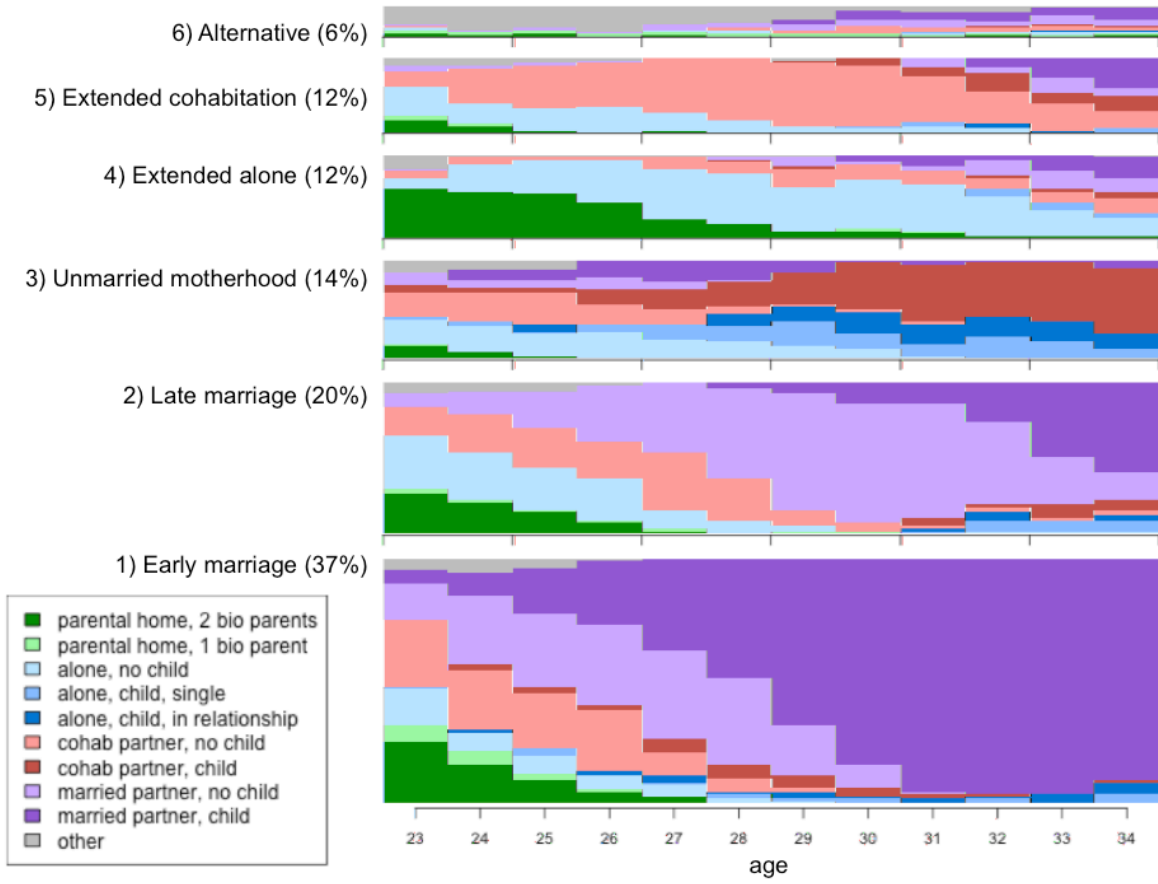
We used the *Stepout* study on mothers in Geneva, Switzerland that capitalizes on a matched sampling strategy in which mothers in first-time and in stepfamilies are equalized on a number of sociodemographic background characteristics. This enabled us to rule out socioeconomic differences between first-time families and stepfamilies as an explanation for the differences found between them, a notorious challenge in research comparing family structures. Further, *Stepout* provided a sufficiently large subgroup of stepfamilies to allow meaningful comparisons between the two family structures. Similar data collection procedures might prove useful in family research more broadly, especially in the presence of small subgroups, and when confounding with socio-economic factors is strong.

The results should be interpreted in the context of an urban area in Switzerland, which is categorized as a highly traditionalist welfare state in terms of gender and family policies. While the results likely carry some generalizability for urban areas in similar welfare state setting, the



effects of deviating from the standard life cycle model of family formation might be particularly pronounced in such a context, where it is strongly enforced. The theoretical framework and methodological approach followed in this study easily extend to cross-national comparisons that should be employed in future research to advance insights on the enduring consequences of the growing diversity of family formation for family interactions. The results presented in this research hope to stimulate psychologists and sociologists interested in micro family interactions to pay more attention to the complex interplay of advantages and disadvantages that unfold across life long trajectories in the family realm.

Figure 2: State Distribution Plots of six family formation patterns, sorted by cluster size (view in color)



*Table 1: Coparenting practices, descriptive statistics (N=292)*

Variables	M	SD	Range	N of items	alpha
Integrity	2.92	2.19	0 - 7	7	.82
Conflict	5.43	4.51	0 - 17	3	.89
Disparagement	2.07	0.81	1 - 5	3	.74

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of six family formation clusters

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Total	Kruskal-Wallis
	<i>Early marriage</i>	<i>Late marriage</i>	<i>Unmarried motherhood</i>	<i>Extended alone</i>	<i>Extended cohabitation</i>	<i>Alternativ</i>		<i>Chi2 &amp; F-value</i>
N	107	57	40	36	34	18	292	
Percent	37	20	14	12	12	6	100	
Stepfamilies	42	42	83	44	53	39	49	22.28***
Higher education	43	60	58	75	62	72	56	15.31**
Born abroad	28	39	20	44	27	50	32	10.21#
Parental divorce	33	22	43	8	29	28	29	13.22*
Mean Age at interview (SD)	39.0 (3.7)	41.9 (3.8)	37.2 (3.4)	43.9 (3.6)	42.8 (3.7)	44.3 (4.9)	40.7 (4.4)	41.97***
Mean Child age (SD)	10.7 (1.9)	9.9 (2.0)	10.0 (1.8)	9.7 (2.2)	9.9 (2.4)	10.0 (2.0)	10.2 (2.0)	6.14*
<i>Proportion of time spent in state age between 23-34</i>								
Education	5	6	10	10	5	4	6	
Full-time	42	56	47	49	61	70	50	
Part-time	35	21	31	28	17	19	28	
Home	14	11	8	7	13	6	11	
<i>Average years spent in state age 23-34 (SD)</i>								
Education	0.6	0.7	11.1	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.8	
Full-time	5.0	6.6)	5.6)	5.8	7.1	8.3	5.9	
Part-time	4.1	2.5)	3.8)	3.3	2.0	2.3	3.3	
Home	1.7	1.3)	1.0)	0.8	1.5	0.7	1.3	
Complexity	5.1 (1.6)	5.9 (1.5)	6.4 (1.2)	5.1 (1.9)	5.3 (1.8)	5.3 (1.5)	5.5 (1.6)	0.213
Distance	9.1 (3.4)	10.9 (3.9)	14.0 (4.7)	13.1 (6.0)	10.4 (4.0)	12.5 (5.5)	16.0 (5.3)	

Notes: Significance levels #  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Table 2 continued: Descriptives on mean duration in sequence states for six family formation clusters*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Total
	<i>Early marriage</i>	<i>Late marriage</i>	<i>Unmarried motherhood</i>	<i>Extended alone</i>	<i>Extended cohabitation</i>	<i>Alternative arrangements</i>	
Duration in:							
Parental home, 2 bio	0.58	0.70	0.23	2.78	0.32	0.44	0.79
Parental home, 1 bio	0.16	0.14	0.03	0.06	0.09	1.11	0.17
Alone, no child	0.43	1.53	1.63	5.31	2.00	0.50	1.60
Alone, child, single	0.15	0.23	1.50	0.22	0.15	0.06	0.35
Alone, child, relationship	0.21	0.11	1.33	0.00	0.09	0.11	0.30
Cohabiting partner, no child	1.16	1.88	1.38	1.53	6.74	0.83	2.00
Cohabiting partner, child	0.31	0.23	3.98	0.19	0.82	0.17	0.83
Married partner, no child	2.08	5.26	0.50	0.83	0.71	1.89	2.16
Married partner, child	6.77	1.74	1.13	0.72	0.79	1.61	3.25
Other	0.15	0.19	0.33	0.36	0.29	5.28	0.54

Table 3. Summary of OLS regression on Coparenting Practices and family formation trajectories for first-time and stepfamilies (N=292)

Variable	Integrity		Conflict		Disparagement	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
<i>Family pathways (a)</i>						
(2) Late marriage	-0.15	0.31	0.29	0.69	0.30#	0.18
(3) Unmarried motherhood	-0.38	0.54	-0.52	1.19	0.54#	0.32
(4) Extended living alone	-0.17	0.37	1.02	1.19	0.51*	0.22
(5) Extended cohabitation	-0.01	0.40	0.76	0.88	-0.02	0.23
(6) Alternative arrangements	0.04	0.48	1.08	1.05	0.42	0.28
<i>Stepfamily interactions (b)</i>						
Step family	-3.69***	0.26	-6.96***	0.58	0.19	0.16
(2) Late marriage × Step	1.07*	0.45	1.46	0.99	-0.73**	0.26
(3) Unmarried motherhood × Step	1.04#	0.62	1.78	1.36	-0.92*	0.36
(4) Extended alone × Step	0.06	0.53	-0.99	1.16	-0.92**	0.31
(5) Extended cohabitation × Step	-0.12	0.53	-0.91	1.18	-0.17	0.32
(6) Alternative × Step	-1.09	0.71	-2.62#	1.58	-0.84*	0.42
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age of mother (c)	0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.05	-0.01	0.01
Mother born abroad (d)	-0.11	0.17	-0.17	0.39	-0.00	0.10
Mother high education (e)	0.15	0.16	0.10	0.36	0.16#	0.10
Age of child (c)	-0.09	0.04	-0.04	0.10	0.00	0.03
Gender of child: boy (d)	-0.05	0.16	-0.11	0.35	-0.12	0.09
Intercept	4.62***	0.21	8.48***		2.323***	
R2 (adj.)	.65(.63)		.59 (.57)		.10 (.05)	

Notes: Significance levels #  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , a) reference category= (1) early marriage, b) 1= stepfamily, 0=fist-time family, c) centered at the mean, d) 1=mother born abroad, 0=mother born in Switzerland, e) 1=mother higher educational degree, 0=mother lower education.

## References

- Abbott, A. (1995). Sequence Analysis: New Methods for Old Ideas. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21, 93–113.
- Aldous, J. (1990). Family Development and the Life Course: Two Perspectives on Family Change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 52(3), 571–583.
- Aldous, J. (1996). *Family Careers: Rethinking the Developmental Perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Amato, P. R. (2000a). The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children. *Journal Of Marriage And The Family*, 62(November), 1269–1287.
- Amato, P. R. (2000b). The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children. *Journal Of Marriage And The Family*, 62(November), 1269–1287.
- Amato, P. R., & DeBoer, D. D. (2001). The Transmission of Marital Instability across Generations: Relationship Skills or Commitment to Marriage? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(4), 1038–1051. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3599812>
- Amato, P. R., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: a meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110(1), 26–46. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1832495>
- Beck, A. N., Cooper, C. E., McLanahan, S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2010). Partnership Transitions and Maternal Parenting. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 72(2), 219–233. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00695.x
- Brückner, H., & Mayer, K. U. (2005). The De-Standardization of the Life Course: What It Might Mean and If it Means Anything Whether It Actually Took Place. In R. Macmillan (Ed.), *The structure of the life course. Standardized? Individualized? Differentiated?* (pp. 27–54). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Bumpass, L., & Lu, H. (2000). Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts in the United States. *Population Studies*, 54(1), 29–41.
- Carlson, M. J., & England, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Carlson, M. J., McLanahan, S. S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2008). Coparenting and nonresident fathers involvement with young children after a nonmarital birth. *Demography*, 45(2), 461–488.
- Cherlin, A. (2010). Demographic Trends in the United States: A Review of Research in the 2000s. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 72(3), 403–419. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00710.x
- Crosnoe, R., & Cavanagh, S. E. (2010). Families With Children and Adolescents: A Review, Critique, and Future Agenda. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 594–611. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00720.x
- Crosnoe, R., Prickett, K. C., Smith, C., & Cavanagh, S. (2014). Changes in young children's

- family structures and child care arrangements. *Demography*, 51(2), 459–83. doi:10.1007/s13524-013-0258-5
- Duvall, E. M. (2014). Family Development's First Forty Years, 37(2), 127–134.
- Elzinga, C. H., & Liefbroer, A. C. (2007). De-standardization of Family-Life Trajectories of Young Adults: A Cross-National Comparison Using Sequence Analysis. *European Journal of Population / Revue Européenne de Démographie*, 23(3-4), 225–250. doi:10.1007/s10680-007-9133-7
- Fasang, A. E. (2014). "New Perspectives on Family Formation: What can we learn from Sequence Analysis? In P. Blanchard, F. Bühlmann, & J.-A. Gauthier (Eds.), *Advances in Sequence Analysis: Methods, Theories and Applications*. Springer.
- Fomby, P., & Cherlin, A. J. (2007). Family Instability and Child Well-Being. *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 181–204. doi:10.1177/000312240707200203
- Glick, P. C. (1977). Updating the Life Cycle of the Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 39(1), 5–13.
- Goldscheider, F. (1997). Recent Changes in U.S. Young Adult Living Arrangements in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Family Issues*, 18(6), 708–724. doi:10.1177/019251397018006008
- Gornick, J. C., Meyers, M. K., & Ross, K. E. (1997). Supporting the Employment of Mothers: Policy Variation Across Fourteen Welfare States. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7(1), 45–70. doi:10.1177/095892879700700103
- Kellerhals, J., Widmer, E.D. (2012). *Familles en Suisse. Nouveaux liens*. 3ème édition. Le Savoir suisse, Lausanne. [Ref bibtex](#) | [Abstract](#) | [Full text](#)
- Kennedy, S., & Ruggles, S. (2014). Breaking up is hard to count: the rise of divorce in the United States, 1980-2010. *Demography*, 51(2), 587–98. doi:10.1007/s13524-013-0270-9
- Korpi, W. (2000). Faces of Inequality: Gender, Class, and Patterns of Inequalities in Different Types of Welfare States. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 7(2), 127–191. Retrieved from <http://sp.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/doi/10.1093/sp/7.2.127>
- McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging Destinies: How Children Are Faring Under the Second Demographic Transition. *Demography*, 41(4), 607–627. doi:10.1353/dem.2004.0033
- Neugarten, B. L., Moore, J. W., & Lowe, J. C. (1965). Age norms, age constraints, and adult socialization. *American journal of Sociology*, 710-717.
- Osborne, C., & McLanahan, S. (2007). Partnership Instability and Child Well-Being, 69(4), 1065–1083.
- Prince Cooke, L. (2011). *Gender-Class Equality in Political Economies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Settersten Jr, R. A. (2003). *Age structuring and the rhythm of the life course* (pp. 81-98). Springer US.
- Shanahan, M. J. (2000). Pathways to Adulthood in Changing Societies: Variability and



- Mechanisms in Life Course Perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 667–692.
- Thomson, E., Hanson, T. L., & McLanahan, S. S. (1994). Family Structure and Child Well-Being: Economic Resources vs . Parental Behaviors, 73(1), 221–242.
- Waite, L. J., Goldscheider, F. K., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Nonfamily Living and the Erosion of Traditional Family Orientations Among Young Adults. *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 541–554.
- Widmer, E. D. (2010). *Family configurations. A Structural Approach to Family Diversity*. London: Ashgate Publishing.
- Widmer, E. D., Favez, N., Aeby, G., De Carlo, I., & Doan, M. (2012). *Capital social et coparentage dans les familles recomposees et de premiere union*. Geneva, Switzerland: Department of Sociology.
- Widmer, E. D., & Ritschard, G. (2009). The de-standardization of the life course: Are men and women equal? *Advances in Life Course Research*, 14, 28–39.  
doi:10.1016/j.alcr.2009.04.001
- Wolfinger, N. H. (2003). Parental Divorce and Offspring Marriage: Early or Late? *Social Forces*, 82(1), 337–353. doi:10.1353/sof.2003.0108