



The determinants of partnership trajectories from marriage. What are the roles of education, parental characteristics and differing transitions to adulthood?

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The image shows the logo for the LONGPOP project. It features a stylized rainbow graphic on the left and the text 'LONGPOP' in a bold, blue font on the right. Below the logo, there are logos for the European Commission and the European Union, along with text indicating funding from the Horizon 2020 programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 676060. At the bottom, there is a small circular logo of KU Leuven.

LONGPOP

European Commission | Horizon 2020
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Research objectives

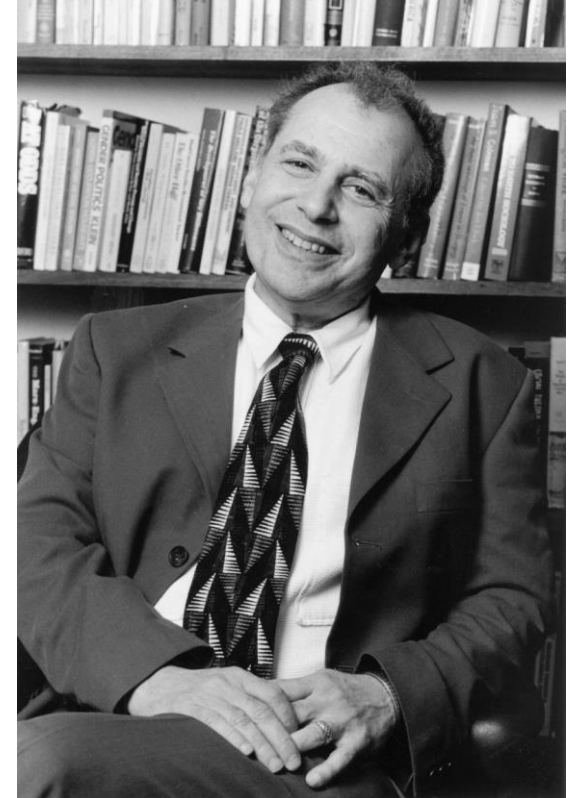
- How may factors across the life course influence partnership trajectories from marriage onwards?
 - Length of marriage
 - Incidence of divorce
 - Length of post-divorce periods alone
 - Length and number of re-partnerships
- Who is predominantly affected by these things and what are they associated with?



Background research: two-tier family system

“While marital instability has long been more common among the less advantaged, the gap in marriage practices between the top and bottom has grown over the past 50 years. As a result, the United States has moved toward a two-tier family system in which practices in establishing and maintaining families among the affluent and the disadvantaged have become more dissimilar”

Frank F. Furstenberg (2014) *“Fifty Years of Family Change: From Consensus to Complexity”*



Background research: theoretical mechanisms

Increasing stability (high education)



- Increasing maternal employment and more stable family economies (2 salaries)
- Later marriage and fertility (completed education, more time to chose)

Declining stability (low education)



- Slower increase in maternal employment, poorer pay, unstable family economies
- Earlier fertility
- Increased divorce
- Earlier ages of leaving the home and marriage
- Increasing and relatively unstable cohabitation (US)
- Parental divorce?

(Amato, 1996; Amato, 2000; Amato & Kane, 2011; Cherlin, 2014; Cherlin, 2008; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1996; McLanahan 2015; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; McLanahan, 2004; Stanfors & Scott, 2013; Thomson & Sarah, 2012)

Research questions: how does this affect post-divorce partnerships and families?

1. How does education influence divorce and partnership trajectories from marriage? Is there a two tier family system in relation to ones own and ones parental education?
2. Does the experience of parental partnership instability during childhood affect partnership trajectories from marriage? If so, at what age is this influence important?
3. Do differing transitions to adulthood, including earlier union formations, ages of leaving the parental home and earlier first births have an impact on partnership trajectories trajectories?

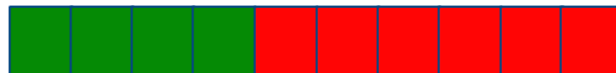
Methods: sequence analysis

- Partnership trajectories from divorce. Up to 7 years of post divorce observations as per (Vanasche et al 2015)
- Those who never divorce are included, but the first state marriage is censored. This retains observations for regression analysis thereafter
- Just partnerships where cohabitation occurs
- Up to three post-divorce partnerships



Methods: sequence analysis

- OM (optical matching) method used, initially for simplicity
 - Comes from biology and DNA sequencing.
 - Based on Levenshtein edit distance (1966)
 - What does it take to transform one sequence into the other by inserting, deleting or substituting an element.
- Average Silhouette Width (ASW) used to select recommended number of clusters and assess quality of structures.
- The PAM (“Partitioning Around Medoids”) clustering method using the wckMedRange function from the “Weighted Cluster” Package in (Studer 2017).



Methods: partnership trajectory variables

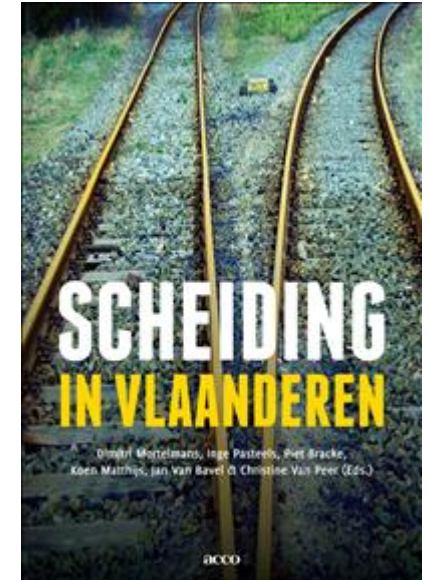
State	Event
Married	Marriage date
Divorced	End of cohabitation with spouse preceding divorce*
Re-partner 1	Move into same household as new partner (1)
Separated 1	Move out of household of partner (1)
Re-partner 2	Move into same household as new partner (2)
Separated 2	Move out of household of partner (2)
Re-partner 3	Move into same household as new partner (3)

*Legal date of divorce normally after end of cohabitation and also many new partnerships/cohabitations

(partnered vs single OR partnership number?)

Data: Divorce in Flanders Survey

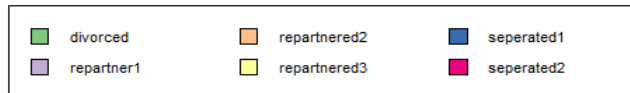
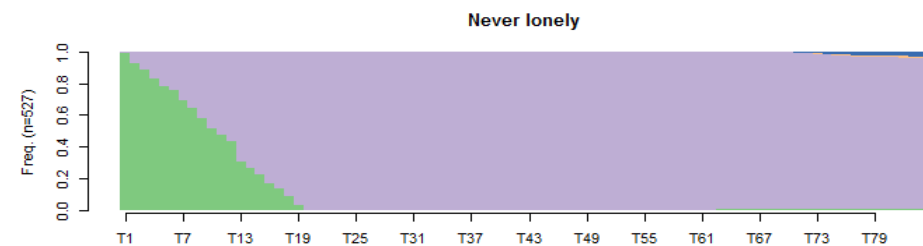
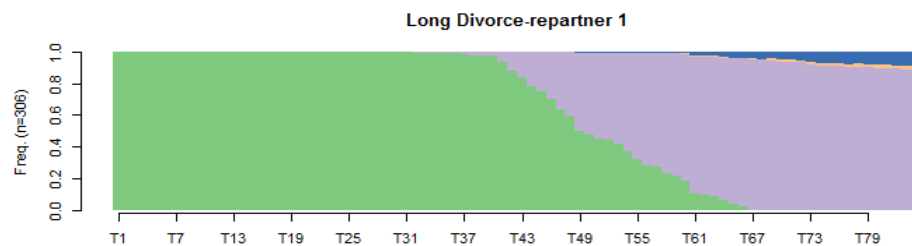
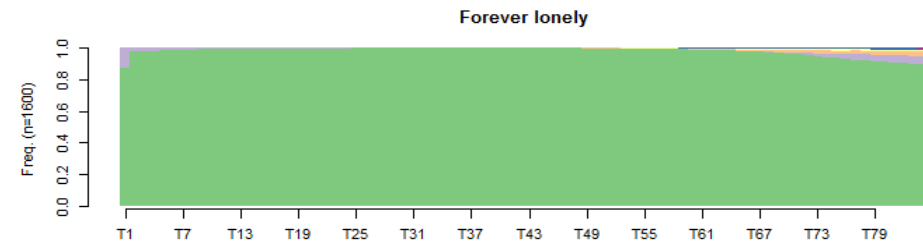
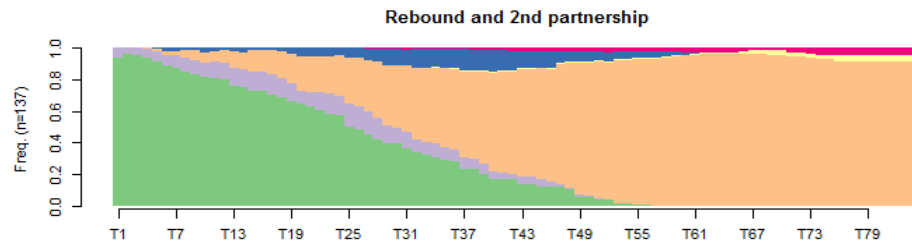
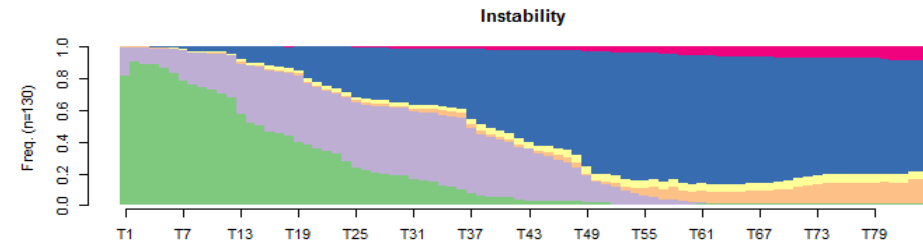
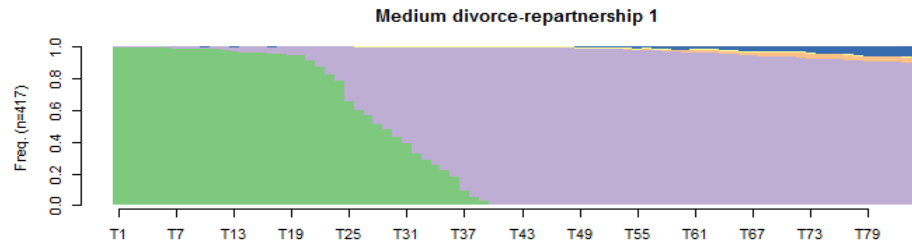
- The primary dataset is “*Divorce in Flanders survey*” (Mortelmans et al 2012) collected in 2009, Flanders
- Three generations of the same family. Selected reference marriage, which intact (n=1,811) or divorced (n=4,659)
- The sample contains couples married between January 1st, 1971 and December 31st, 2008
- Stratified to year of marriage, but over representing divorcees at 2/3 of sample
- All respondents have Belgian Nationality, though parents may be non-Belgian
- Retrospective partnership histories from divorce (partnerships, cohabitations, marriages)



Methods: regression analysis

- Survival analysis of entering particular partnership trajectories
 - Risk of particular partnership typology = sex + age + education + parental nationality + parenthood status + birth cohort + age marriage + age leave parental home + cohabitation pre-marriage
- Competing risk model as per Studer et al (2018)
 - (Not completed)

Results: D-plot of clusters



Model 1: Risk of “forever lonely”

Variable	coef	exp(coef)	se(coef)	z	Pr(> z)	Sig
Sex (ref-male)						
Female	0,1702	1,1860	0,0544	3,1300	0,0018	**
Education (ref - ISCED score 1-2)						
ISCED 3-4	-0,0262	0,9742	0,0639	-0,4100	0,6820	
ISCED 5-8	-0,1911	0,8261	0,0708	-2,6970	0,0070	**
Age						
Year continuous	-0,0001	0,9999	0,0001	-0,9940	0,3201	
Parental Divorce (ref - no)						
While under 18	0,1383	1,1480	0,1153	1,2000	0,2303	
As an adult	0,0360	1,0370	0,1748	0,2060	0,8369	
Age of marriage						
Year continuous	0,0277	1,0280	0,0120	2,3100	0,0209	*
Cohabitation premarriage other than spouse (ref-no)						
Yes	0,2221	1,2490	0,1439	1,5430	0,1228	
Cohabitation before marriage with partner (ref - no)						
Yes	0,1889	1,2080	0,0742	2,5450	0,0109	*
Age leaving parental home - (ref 18-23)						
Under 18	0,5561	1,7440	0,1994	2,7890	0,0053	**
23-25	-0,1141	0,8922	0,0670	-1,7040	0,0885	.

Signif. codes: 0 ‘***’ 0.001 ‘**’ 0.01 ‘*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1

Conclusions

- Preliminary evidence of two tier family system concerning risk of “forever lonely”, which stays predominantly without a cohabiting union for 7 years following divorce
- Those who are more likely to enter this trajectory are;
 - Women
 - Those with lower levels of education
 - Leave before age 18 with decreasing risk thereafter
 - Cohabitation before marriage?

Methodological reflection

- Regional restriction to only Flanders
- Retrospective data which means many covariates are only captured at the time of the sample (income)
- Fertility not included here (age of first births, number of children)
- Parental background only educational level and parental partnership instability used

Further work

- Competing trajectory model of entering particular typologies upon divorce using all typologies identified here
- Refinement and potential greater complexity to sequences created here.
- Incorporate fertility dynamics
 - Age of 1st birth
 - Partnership status at time of births