



# The profile of stepparents in Flanders and Germany

The educational level and  
parental status of a new partner  
following separation

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# Introduction

- High divorce rates (including parents) and frequent and fast repartnering implies frequent stepfamily formation in many Western countries
- Very few comparative studies on causes and consequences of stepfamily formations
- Family dynamics and outcomes of living in a stepfamily will vary according to:
  - Demographic context: profile of stepfamilies,
  - Cultural and institutional context: norms and regulations
- Present paper: profile of stepparents in terms of educational level and parental status
  - Association with resources that stepparents bring into the family

# Parenthood and union formation: empirical findings

- Parents with residential, minor children are less likely to start a new union than other parents and childless persons (e.g. Beaujouan 2012, Ivanova et al. 2013, Vanassche 2013)
- Findings less consistent for men compared to women:
  - Some studies find evidence for ‘good parent’ effect (e.g. Stewart, Manning & Smock 2003)
- Parents often repartner other parents:
  - Parents only have a lower likelihood of union formation with a childless partner (Goldscheider & Sassler 2006)
  - Complex stepfamily formation



# Parenthood and union formation: 3 types of explanations

	No (minor) children	Residential, minor children	Non- residential, minor children
Need for childless partner	+ fertility intentions + co-residence	+ financial support	+ co-residence

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Attractiveness to childless partner	+ no stepfamily + fertility intentions partner	- residential stepfamily	- stepfamily + no residential stepfamily

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Attractiveness to childless partner	+ no stepfamily + fertility intentions partner	- residential stepfamily	- stepfamily + no residential stepfamily
Attractiveness to partner with children	- simple stepfamily + financial support partner	+ exchange theory + good parent effect - complex stepfamily	+ exchange theory + good parent effect - simple/complex stepfamily

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Opportunities to meet childless partner	+ social activities	- limited social activities	+ social activities
Opportunities to meet partner with children	- restricted access to network other parents (school, community ..)	+ network other parents (school, community ..)	- restricted access to network other parents (school, community ..)

# Parenthood and the educational level of the partner

- Educational level of partner relates to needs and attractiveness of parents on partner market:
  - Need for partner with resources
  - Attractiveness to high educated partners : parenthood and educational level as exchangeable characteristics on relational market
- Persons with lower social status / lower education were found to repartner more frequent somebody with children (e.g. Anderson 2000; Bernhardt & Goldscheider 2001; Vanassche 2013)
  - Versus higher education / social status: more resources

# Contextual differences (Ivanova et al. 2013)

- “Needs, attractiveness, and opportunities of parents might be modified by the cultural and institutional contexts in which they are embedded.”
- Social transfers > Financial needs of single parents
- Divorce rates and attitudes towards divorce > Attractiveness of single parents
- High childcare provision > More opportunities to repartner
- But empirical findings: “story of similarities in the effects rather than differences ...

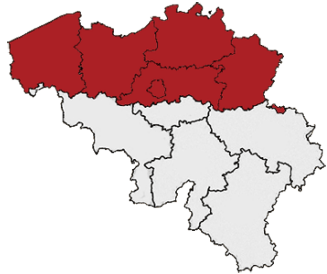


# Present study

- How do separated parents differ from childless men and women in the likelihood of union formation ... :
  - ... in general?
  - ... with a parent?
  - ... with a low educated partner?
  - ... with a low educated parent?
- Are the results different for residential and non-residential children?
- Are the differences between parents and childless men and women different in Flanders and Germany?

# Two contexts

## Flanders



## Germany

Divorce rates:  $F > G$

Weak negative educational gradient

marital disruption:  $F = G$

Shared residence of children:  $F > G$

Child care provision:  $F > G$

Social expenditure per capita:  $F = G$



=> Parenthood bigger impact on union formation in  
Germany?

(European Commission 2009; Harkonen & Dronkers 2006; Ivanova et al. 2013; Kalmijn 2013; Matysiak et al. 2014)

# Two datasets

## Divorce in Flanders



- Flanders, Northern part of Belgium
- Initiated in 2008
- Sample of 1/3 intact and 2/3 dissolved reference marriages
- Marriages between 1970-2009:
  - Belgian nationality
  - No second divorce
  - ...
- Multi-actor design: both (ex-) partners, child, parents, new partners
- (Currently) cross-sectional

## PAIRFAM



- Germany
- Initiated in 2008
- Sample from population Registres
- Three birth cohorts:
  - 1971-1973
  - 1981-1983
  - 1991-1993
- Multi-actor design: partner, child, parents
- Panel study

Both datasets contain very detailed, retrospective information on partnership and fertility history of respondents

# Two research samples

## **Divorce in Flanders (DiF)**

- Ever-divorced
- Birth year 1964-1985
- Consistent information on partnership and fertility history

=> 857 men & 1225 women

## **PAIRFAM – wave 1**

- Ever-divorced/separated
- Birth cohorts 1971-1973 & 1981-1983
- Consistent information on partnership and fertility history

=> 712 men & 1079 women

# Sample characteristics (in % and mean, SD)

	DiF		PAIRFAM	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Age at last separation/divorce (mean, SD)	34(5)	32(6)	28(5)	27(5)
Educational level (in %)				
Low	22	17	9	11
Medium	48	47	50	51
High	30	36	41	38
Year of separation (mean, SD)	2003(5)	2002(5)	2003(4)	2003(4)
Parental status at time of last separation (in %)				
No minor children	31	27	71	56
Non-residential minor children	34	5	21	2
Residential minor children	35	69	8	42



# Models

- Event history analysis modelling the likelihood of union formation (no/yes) in the first 10 years following the last separation
  - Both datasets contain information on the educational level of the current partner, not from previous partners
- Multinomial hazard models, modelling the likelihood of union formation within the first 10 years following the last separation:
  - With resp. a low/medium/high educated partner
  - With resp. a childless partner / partner with child(ren)
  - With resp. a high educated, childless partner / a high educated partner with children / a low educated, childless partner / a low educated partner with children
- Core independent variable: parental status at time of separation
- Control variables: educational level, age, year of separation

# Results union formation (no / yes)

	MEN		WOMEN	
	DiF	PAIRFAM	DiF	PAIRFAM
PARENTAL STATUS				
No minor children	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Non-residential children				0,51*
Residential children			0,72***	0,46***
Events	532	340	702	537

Reference group = no union formation

# Results union formation with low/medium/high educated partner

	MEN						WOMEN					
	DiF			PAIRFAM			DiF			PAIRFAM		
EDUCATION PARTNER	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High
PARENTAL STATUS												
No minor children	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Non-residential children						0,54 *	1,80 *				0,34 *	0,17 ***
Residential children							0,72 °	0,82 °	0,57 ***		0,56 ***	0,37 ***
Events	86	232	210	40	183	112	154	357	186	40	259	231

Reference group = no union formation

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Controlled for educational level, duration, age at time of separation and year of separation

# Results union formation with parent

	MEN					WOMEN				
	DiF		PAIRFAM			DiF		PAIRFAM		
PARTNER HAS CHILDREN	No	Yes	No	Yes	?	No	Yes	No	Yes	?
PARENTAL STATUS										
No minor children	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Non-residential children			0.65 *			0,52 °	2,18 **	0.42°		
Residential children						0,58 ***		0,38 ***	0,55 **	0,55 **
Events	292	240	190	60	90	365	337	283	103	151

Reference group = no union formation

# Results union formation with low educated parent

	MEN								WOMEN									
	DiF				PAIRFAM				DiF				PAIRFAM					
PARTNER HAS CHILDREN EDUCATION PARTNER	No union	No Low	Yes High	Yes Low	No union	No Low	Yes High	Yes Low	No union	No Low	Yes High	Yes Low	No union	No Low	Yes High	Yes Low		
PARENTAL STATUS																		
No minor children																		
Non-residential children					2.13 <sub>o</sub>	1,85 <sub>**</sub>	5,37 <sub>**</sub>		3,25 <sub>**</sub>					3.01 <sub>*</sub>	7,81 <sub>***</sub>	2,81 <sub>o</sub>		14.9 <sub>*</sub>
Residential children	0,25 <sub>o</sub>										1,59 <sub>***</sub>		1,45 <sub>*</sub>	1,94 <sub>*</sub>	1,54 <sub>*</sub>		1,63 <sub>o</sub>	
Events	34		186	52	15		44	16	72		250	87	20		95	8		

Reference group = union formation with medium/high educated partner without children

**! Very small categories**

# Discussion

- Negative selection into stepfamilies in terms of educational level stepparents
  - Indication of parenthood as unattractive characteristic?
- Steparent often bring own children, leading to 'complex' stepfamily formation, also by non-residential parents
  - Additional indication of unattractiveness of parents to non-parents?
- Much similarities between Flanders and Germany, but also differences
  - Stronger effect of parenthood on women in Germany, in line with expectations
  - Only effect of parenthood on men in Germany

# Dicussion

- Important limitation: large differences in sample composition SiV – PAIRFAM for current RQ
- Future work:
  - Sample composition versus differential effect
  - GGS-data, including other countries
  - To be continued ...



Thanks for your attention!



# ADDITIONAL SLIDES



# Summary of findings

- Residential children limit the likelihood of union formation of women in Flanders and Germany
  - In Germany, also non-residential children limit the likelihood of union formation of women
  - Impact of children on women is stronger in Germany compared to Flanders
- Residential children limit especially the likelihood of union formation with a high educated partner for women in Flanders and Germany
  - In Germany, also non-residential children limit especially the likelihood of union formation with a high educated partner for women AND for men
- Residential and non-residential children limit especially the likelihood of union formation with a childless partner for women in Germany and Flanders
  - In Germany, non-residential children also limit the likelihood of union formation with a childless partner for men
- In case of union formation, non-residential children increase the likelihood to start a union with a low educated parent for men and women in Flanders & Germany
  - In Flanders, we also found evidence that residential children increase the likelihood to start a union with a low educated parent women

